











**CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND  
NATIONAL MOVEMENT  
IN INDIA (1919—47)**



# **Constitutional Development and National Movement in India (1919-47)**

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*To My  
Wife*

*Constitutional Development and National Movement  
in India (1919-47)*

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## PREFACE

The period from 1919 to 1947 is of great significance in the History of India. The Government of India Act (1919) introduced partial responsible government in the provinces. Jinnah got his so-called, mutilated and the moth-eaten Pakistan for which the country had to pay a heavy price. The freedom followed by communal orgy and blood bath brought in its train unheard exodus and untold misery to this country.

The book consists of four parts and every part has been divided into nine to fourteen chapters. For the preparation of the book I have utilised official printed reports, some newspapers of the period, certain standard works of eminent scholars such as Dr. S. Gopal and Dr. B.B. Misra, speeches and writings of important personalities, the first six volumes of the secret official documents published by Her Majesty's Government under the title, 'The Transfer of Power,' Sardar Patel's correspondence (10 volumes) edited by Durga Das and the Indian Annual Register edited by N.N. Mitra. I have also consulted the proceedings of the Indian National Congress and All India Muslim League, The Indian Statutory Commission's report, Freedom at Midnight by Collins and Lappierie and Wavell, the Viceroy's Journal.

The First World War had created the economic crisis throughout the country. The British Government in order to meet Indian aspirations and the economic crisis introduced The Government of India Act (1919). The Act introduced responsible government but it did not speak at all of parliamentary government. At this stage Gandhi started the Non-Co-operation Movement in 1920. It was the first mass movement in the country. But Gandhi called off the movement in

February 1922 as the result of Chauri Chaura violence. The great radical thinker M.N. Roy issued a statement that the cessation of non-cooperation was a betrayal of the cause of workers and peasants. Many nationalist leaders had contacts with the Communists party. Sampurnanand had established direct links with communists. The communist influence on the nationalist movement was noticeable in 1924. But it was through Jawaharlal Nehru that the new secular and socialist influence was filtering down the Congress ranks. The end of the year 1926 witnessed the ghastly murder of Swami Shraddhanand by Abdul Rashid. At the Lahore session of 1929 under the presidentship of Jawaharlal Nehru, the Congress passed a resolution of complete independence for the country.

The resolution of complete independence and the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930 gave a new challenge to the Communists. The reorganisation of the Communist party started from 1933. The Indian Socialist Party was born in 1934. M.N. Roy and Jawaharlal Nehru enjoyed the confidence of the Socialist Party. The Nationalist movement had become very strong during this period and the country was passing through the revolutionary movement. Chandra Shekhar Azad had been shot dead by the police in the Alfred Park at Allahabad on February 27, 1931. The execution of Sukh Deo, Bhagat Singh and Shivaram Rajaguru on March 31, 1931 had made the government too unpopular. In this background the Gandhi-Irwin pact was signed on 5th June, 1931. The revolutionary movement had become weakened after their execution.

The Government of India Act of 1935 introduced Federation at the Centre and provincial autonomy in the provinces. The Federal part of the Act could not be implemented for various reasons. The provincial autonomy was inaugurated on April 1, 1937. The left wing of the Congress was opposed to accepting office. Jawaharlal Nehru believed that the main issues of independence and social change 'will fade into the background and petty issues will absorb our attention' But it was difficult to stay outside because the leaders of the right wing of the Congress like Rajagopalachari, Vallabhbhai Patel and others were opposed to this view. So the Congress

formed Ministries in seven provinces. But the Ministry could not function for a long time. Owing to the differences with Lord Linlithgow the Ministries resigned by November 1939.

The year 1940 began with a speech by the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow in Bombay on 10th January. He made it clear that the ultimate objective of the British Government 'is full Dominion status, too, of the statute of Westminster variety.' He therefore appealed to the various political parties to reach some agreement between themselves in order to facilitate the task of the British Government in dealing with the vital questions of Indian constitutional progress. In these circumstances the Congress concluded its session at Ramgarh on March 20, 1940, and the All-India Muslim League at Lahore on March 23, both pulling in different directions, the former trying to back its demand for independence, democracy and national unity by a threat of civil disobedience, the latter demanding now a separate sovereign state for the Indian Muslims who were to be treated as a minority as hitherto but as a nation, separate and distinct from the Hindus. At this time the Governor General issued a statement on 8th August 1940, 'the Famous August Offer'. But this offer could not satisfy either the Congress or the Muslim League.

Due to the complicated war situation the Viceroy appealed for help in order to win the war. Jawaharlal Nehru issued a statement that the first essential condition for co-operation with the Government was the recognition of Indian independence. A sense of frustration had taken over the country. The Cripps Mission of March 1942 could not improve the situation. The Quit India Movement of August 1942 was a natural corollary to the failure of the Mission. At 5 a.m. on 9 August, the police rounded up the leaders of the Congress in their homes. The Communist party of India supported the war policy of the Government. The Home Ministry was now satisfied and the ban on the Communist Party of India was lifted in July 1942, which had been in existence from July 23, 1934. Thus the Communists were with the government during the period of the August Movement of 1942. M.N. Roy, the leader of the Radical Democratic Party, also supported the Government in.

the war-effort and the Government kept Roy in good humour. But Jayaprakash Narayan was a staunch supporter of the August Movement.

The August Movement of 1942 gave Jinnah great advantages. The prestige of Jinnah and the Muslim League had gone up during this period. Jinnah was able to consolidate and strengthen the Muslim League with the helping hand of the government. He represented the Quit India movement as an insidious plot to black mail the British. The tenure of Lord Linlithgow ended and the new Viceroy Lord Wavell took over charge on October 20, 1943. Wavell wanted to solve the constitutional deadlock. In a broadcast the Viceroy said that he proposed to invite Indian political leaders to take counsel with them with a view to the formation of a new Executive Council, more representatives in character with an equal number of Hindus and Muslim. He also announced that orders had been given for the immediate release of the members of the Working Committee of Congress who were still in detention. The Simla Conference met on June 25, 1945 and continued till July 14, 1945. The Conference, though ended in failure, may be regarded in some ways as the greatest achievement of Wavell's Viceroyalty.

The year 1946 opened. On February 19, 1946, a hunger strike by some ratings of the Signal School in Bombay on grounds of inadequate pay and a racial discrimination touched off a mutiny by other ratings who took possession of their ships and threatened to open fire on the military guard. Ratings at Karachi followed their example. Sympathetic strikes and demonstrations were organized in the city of Bombay and serious disturbances ensued in which about 200 people were killed. Vallabhbhai Patel personally intervened to induce the ratings to surrender. There was also unrest at this time in the R.I.A.F. and in some of the technical units of the Indian Army. The second important event of this year was the Cabinet Mission comprising Lord Pethick Lawrence, Secretary of State for India, Sir S. Stafford Cripps, President of the Board of Trade and Mr. A.U. Alexander, First Lord of the Admiralty reached—Delhi in the third week of March. The task of the Mission

was to seek agreement with Indian leaders on the principles and procedures to be followed in framing a new constitution. It was also envisaged that simultaneously, the Viceroy, in consultation with the Mission, would open negotiations with the two principal political parties the Congress and the Muslim League for the formation of a new 'Interim' Government which would hold office, while the constitution was being framed and would include no British member except the Viceroy himself.

The Simla Conference began in a bitter atmosphere with Jinnah's refusal to shake hands with Azad. However, after the failure of the Second Simla Conference on May 2, 1946, the Mission decided to elaborate and perfect its proposals for a three-tier constitutional structure. to add thereto proposals for constitution-making machinery whereby all the details could be worked out and to issue the whole as a kind of reward in the hope that both parties would accept it. This they did in a statement published on 16th May immediately after their return from Simla to Delhi. In another statement dated 16 June, it was announced that the Viceroy had issued invitations to fourteen persons, to serve as members of the Interim Government.

After some complicated stages, the Interim Government was formed on Sept. 2, 1946 with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru as the Vice-President. The League joined the government by Oct. 15. The coalition government could not work in a spirit of co-operation. The unfortunate event of this period was the outbreak of riot in Calcutta, which had started before the formation of the Interim government. It had its repercussions in Bihar also. Vallabhbhai Patel and Liaquat Ali Khan come to Patna. The situation was alarming in Bihar. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Dr. Rajendra Prasad were at Patna at this time.

The year 1947 dawned. There had been basic differences between the British Cabinet and Lord Wavell. Wavell was serious in his mind that the transfer of power in India should be made not later than March 31, 1948. He had written a letter to the British Prime Minister in this connection on Dec. 20, 1946. But Bevin and Alexander were imperialists and disliked the idea of leaving India. So this year was more of a strain to Wavell. The Viceroy got a letter on Feb. 4, 1947

from the Prime Minister by special messenger dismissing him from the post at a month's notice.

His Majesty's Government statement was made on Thursday, 20th Feb. 1947. The statement announced that it was H.M.G's definite intention to effect the transfer of power to responsible Indian hands by a date not later than June 1948. It was also announced that the appointment of Lord Wavell was being terminated and that Lord Mountbatten was being appointed in his place. He was sworn in as Viceroy on March 24, 1947. He at once moved into action. By this time Congress Working Committee had accepted the principle of the partition of Punjab in its meeting held on March 8, 1947. The New Viceroy prepared a plan for the partition of the country. The Cabinet Mission Plan was now dead. The 'Dickie Bird Plan' was prepared and was sent to London for approval by the Cabinet. But Jawaharlal Nehru rejected this plan on May 10, 1947 at Simla. So the plan was recasted to meet Nehru's main objection. The Mountbatten Plan was accepted by Nehru and other national leaders at the conference with the Viceroy on 2nd June 1947. The Viceroy and other national leaders in separate broadcast over the radio on 3rd June, 1947 gave their approval to the scheme. Jinnah's two-nation theory paved the way and finally the country had to be bifurcated in two parts. The transfer of power took place.

I am thankful to some of my friends who read the whole typescript and made many suggestions. I am extremely thankful to the proprietor of Janaki Prakashan Mr. R.B. Singh and Shri N.K. Singh, for releasing the book in a very little time. My thanks are no less due to Shri B.P. Ambastha, M.A., Fellow R.P.J. Research Institute, Patna, who helped me a lot in the course of publication. I am also thankful to Mr. S.R. Yadav who took pains to check the proofs. Despite all the effort to avoid errors some might have inadvertently crept in. I would be happy to correct myself, if such errors are brought to my notice.

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## **PRINCIPAL OFFICE HOLDERS OF (1942-47) UNITED KINGDOM WAR CABINET**

Prime Minister and First Lord of the Treasury, Minister of Defence	Mr. Winston S. Churchill
Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs	Mr. Clement Attlee
Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons	Sir Stafford Cripps (Until 22 Nov. 1942)
Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and (from 22nd Nov. 1942) Leader of the House of Commons	Sir Anthony Eden
Lord President of the Council	Sir John Anderson
Minister of Production	Mr. Ernest Bevin
Secretary of State for the Home Department and Minister of Home Security	Mr. Herbert Morrison (in War Cabinet from 22nd Nov. 1942)
Minister of State in the Middle East	Mr. R.C. Casey
Viscount Halifax, British Ambassador to the United States from January 1941, remaining a Member of the War Cabinet.	

### *Other Important Ministers of this Volume*

Secretary of State for Air Force	Sir Archibald Sinclair
Minister of Aircraft Production	Sir Stafford Cripps (From 22 Nov. 1942)

Secretary of State for the Colonies	Viscount Cranborne Colonel Iliver Stanley (From 22 Nov 1942)
Secretary of State for India India and for Burma	Mr. L.S. Amery
Minister of Information	Mr. Brenden Bracken
Lord Chancellor	Viscount Simon
Lord Privy Seal	Viscount Cranborne (From 22 November, 1942)
President of the Board of Trade	Mr. Hugh Dalton.

*New Government From 1945*

Prime Minister and First Lord of the Treasury	Mr. Clement Attlee
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*India Office*

Secretary of State	Mr. L.S. Amery
Permanent Under-Secretary	Sir David Monteath
Parliamentary Under-Secretary	Duke of Devonshire
Private Secretary to Secretary of State.	Mr. F.F. Turnbull

*India*

Viceroy, Governor-General and Crown Representative	The Marquess of Linlithgow (1937-1943)
Viceroy, Governor-General and Crown Representative	Lord Wavell (1943-1947)
Viceroy, Governor-General and Crown Representative	Lord Mountbatten (1947)
Private Secretary to the Viceroy (Linlithgow)	Sir Gilbert Laithwaite
Private Secretary to the Viceroy (Wavell) Private Secretary to the Viceroy (Mountbatten)	Sir Eric Mieville.

*Executive Council*

<b>Commander-in-Chief</b>	<b>General Sir Archibald Wavell (Field Marshal from 1 Jan. 1943)</b>
<b>Home</b>	<b>Sir Reginold Maxwell, I.C.S</b>
<b>Finance</b>	<b>Sir Jeremy Raisman, I.C.S.</b>
<b>War Transport</b>	<b>Sir Edward Benthall</b>
<b>Post and Air</b>	<b>Sir Mahomed Usman</b>
<b>Education, Health and Lands</b>	<b>Sir Jogendra Singh</b>
<b>Commerce</b>	<b>Mr. Nalini Sarkar (Resigned 17 February 1943)</b>
<b>Labour</b>	<b>Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar</b>
<b>Law</b>	<b>Sir Sultan Ahmad</b>
<b>Indian Overseas</b>	<b>Dr. Madhao Shrihari Aney (Resigned 17 February 1943)</b>
<b>Supply</b>	<b>Sir Homi Mody (Resigned 17 February 1943)</b>
<b>Civil Defence</b>	<b>Sir J.P. Srivastav</b>
<b>Defence</b>	<b>Sir Firoz Khan Noon</b>

From 2 May 1943 the following changes were made :

<b>Commerce, Food and Industries and Civil Supplies</b>	<b>Sir M. Azizul Haque (Assumed charge of Office 1 May)</b>
<b>Law</b>	<b>Sir Asoka Kumar Roy (Assumed Charge of Office 1 June)</b>
<b>Indian Overseas</b>	<b>Dr. N.B. Khare (assumed Charge of office 6 May)</b>
<b>Information and Broadcasting</b>	<b>Sir Sultan Ahmed</b>
<b>Supply</b>	<b>Sir Ramaswami Mudaliar</b>

# Part I

## ONE

### **THE GENESIS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA ACT, 1919**

The reforms of 1909 failed to satisfy the Indian people who demanded self-government. Towards the end of 1912 India was politically very dull. Bal Gangadhar Tilak was in jail from 1908. The Extremists had been sat upon and were lying low without any effective leadership. The Moderates had been effectively rallied to the Morley-Minto Scheme of Councils.

The First World War influenced developments in India in a variety of ways, both directly and indirectly and thus brought about considerable changes. Politics was at a low ebb in India on the eve of the War. The coming of the War diverted attention of the people from politics and made real political activity difficult. In public, loud shouts of loyalty to Britain filled the air.<sup>1</sup> The ruling princes showed their sense of loyalty to the Government. Certain persons of the upper-middle classes were also loyal to the Government. The upper-middle classes believed that the War was being fought for democracy,

liberty and the freedom of nationalities. They thought that the British Government would extend these fine principles to India and so they rendered help to Britain, in her hour of need. The English people appreciated this display of loyalty in India. It was stated by those in authority that England would look at India with a "new angle of vision" after the end of the first World War.

But there were some Indians, both in India and in foreign countries, who were not loyal to the Government. They decided to help Germany in the war. Some Indians in Germany and other countries of Europe met in Berlin and formed a Committee for this purpose. A written agreement was reached between the Committee and the German Government. The Indians agreed to help the German Government on this condition that after the end of the war, Germany would insist on Indian freedom.<sup>2</sup> But this Committee could not help Germany.

In December 1914, Congress members resolved to "put a price" on their co-operation in the war effort. They declared that the British Government should take such measures as might "be necessary for the recognition of India as a component part of a Federal Empire, in the full and free enjoyment of the rights belonging to that status."

Politics came out of the pre-war and early war lull in 1916 and various demands for self-government and the like began to be made. Lokamanya Tilak was released from custody on June 17, 1914. The National Congress then was in the hands of the Moderate group. Mrs. Annie Besant organised Home Rule League in Sept. 1915. Tilak also formed Home Rule League in 1916 in Maharashtra. A Home League Rule for India was established at London on June 7, 1916. Home Rule campaign was carried to the U.S.A. also. For some years Mrs. Besant played an important part in Indian politics. The Government considered her propaganda so dangerous that she was interned for some months. Her internment stirred even the older generation, including many of the Moderate leaders. The Home Rule Leagues were attracting not only all the old Extremists but large numbers of newcomers from the middle classes. They did not touch the masses.

The Lucknow Congress of 1916 marked the revival of the National Congress. From that time onwards it grew in strength and importance and for the first time in its history, began to be really a national organization of the middle classes. This Congress was notable for another reunion, a Hindu-Muslim one. The important aspect of this session was that Mohandas Karam Chand Gandhi attended it. But he was indifferent then. He refused to take part in Congress or national politics and confined himself to the South African Indian question. Pt. Nehru expressed his opinion on Gandhiji in this way: 'All of us admired him for heroic fight in South Africa, but he seemed very distant and different and unpolitical to many of us young men.'<sup>3</sup>

As the demand for self-government grew in India, the British Government made various promises and started inquiries in India which occupied the people's attention. There was a complex political situation in the country. The temper of discontent and eager anticipation became increasingly felt on the Indian scene. Sir Reginald Craddock, the Home Member of the Government of India summed up his views in this way: "The position is one of great difficulty, the Moderate leaders can command no support among the vocal classes who are being led at the heels of Tilak and Besant. The great figures among the Moderates have passed away. Home Rule is pressed for not so much as constitutional reform now becoming due, but as the only salvation from innumerable wrongs and grievances under which India is suffering...under cover of constitutional agitation, the minds of the people who read newspapers are being poisoned against the British Government."<sup>4</sup>

Craddock wrote still further: "Sedition in India is like the tides which erode a coastline as the sea encroaches. The last high tide was in 1907-1908. The tide then went out, but it is flowing in now rapidly, and it will reach a point now higher than it ever reached before. We must have our dam in order lest it inundate sound land."<sup>5</sup>

The British Government felt that the time had come to meet Indian aspirations. Dorothy Norman has commented

that the projected dam against the seditious flood was a declaration of policy. On August 20, 1917, the Montagu Declaration stated : "The policy of His Majesty's Government...is that of increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration, and gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realization of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire".

This declaration did not satisfy the Congress leaders. Even Austen Chamberlain, a British Conservative—a member of the India Office in 1917—was moved to say at the time : "After all, we must take into account the changes produced by the war....the constant emphasis laid upon the fact that the Allies are fighting for freedom and nationality ...the revolution in Russia, and the way it has been hailed throughout Europe....the effect of all these things on Indian opinion and on our own attitude to Indian questions. What would have seemed a great advance a little time ago, would now satisfy no one and we should, I think, be prepared for bold and radical measures."<sup>6</sup>

Mr. Montagu arrived in India in 1917. He had in mind to do 'something big' and 'epoch-making' for the country. He set himself "to the task of outlining a new constitution which would set India on the road to self-government." But Lord Chelmsford and the civil servants stood in the way of Mr. Montagu. So despite his hopes, he could not do much for the country and the Montagu-Chelmsford Report of 1918 was published.

From the Montagu-Chelmsford Report, 1918 : (1) "There should be, as far as possible, complete popular control in local bodies and the largest possible independence for them of outside control." Self-Government should be gradual and the advance, should be tested at each stage.

It should therefore begin at the lowest level.

## (2) Advance proposed in the provinces

The formula ran thus ; "The provinces are the domain in which the earlier steps towards the progressive realisation of responsible government should be taken. Some measure of

responsibility should be given at once, and our aim is to give complete responsibility as soon as conditions permit. This involves at once giving the provinces the largest responsibility as soon as conditions permit. This involves at once giving the provinces the largest measure of independence, legislative, administrative, and financial, of the Government of India which is compatible with the due discharge by the latter of its own responsibilities."—Members of the provincial executive should be responsible to the provincial Assembly. The constituencies should be based on broad franchise. The theory of responsible government means that the executive retains office only so long as it commands the support of majority of the Assembly but in India conditions are different. The provincial areas are large. Administrative experience is limited. Electoral experiences are entirely lacking. Therefore complete responsibility cannot be at once granted. Exercise of responsibility should be gradual and therefore beginning is to be made by transferring responsibility for certain functions of Government, while reserving control over others.

#### **(3) Advance proposed in the Government of India**

The formula ran thus : "The Government of India must remain wholly responsible to Parliament, and saving such responsibility, its authority in essential matters must remain indisputable, pending experience of the effect of the changes now to be introduced in the provinces. In the mean time, the Indian legislative Council should be enlarged and made more representative and its opportunities of influencing Government increased."—It follows that while partial responsibility is introduced in the provinces, it is just experiment and until this experiment succeeds, a similar experiment cannot be made at the Centre but at the same time Central Legislature should be widened and made more representative in character and giving greater opportunities of influencing the Government.

#### **(4) Proposal or Changes in England**

The formula ran thus : "In proportion as the foregoing changes takes effect, the control of Parliament and the Secretary

of state over the Government of India and Provincial Governments must be relaxed." This was a logical proposal and unless the control of the Home Government was relaxed, the executives in India might have their liberty of action be paralysed by the pressure of opposite direction.

(The process of decentralisation advocated by Montagu-Chelmsford scheme afterwards came to be adversely criticised by Simon Commission whose view was that the centralising process which had developed from 1833 to 1919 should be revived because India required above everything else a strong nerve centre).

The Montagu-Chelmsford Report commentary on communal Electorates included at least one observation deserving of special attention : "We regard any system of communal electorate....as a very serious hindrance to the development of the self-governing principle. The evils of any extension of the system are plain."

Although to the British, the Montagu-Chelmsford Report seemed an appropriate introduction to responsible government in the sub-continent, to most Indian nationalists, however, it was a paltry concession, far short of the expectations raised by the Montagu declaration. Here, Congress demanding 'Self-Government within the Empire', asserted that India was ready for responsible government and requested the abandonment of the notion of Dyarchy, which would have left the Central Government and most vital provincial matters under the Executive jurisdiction of the existing regime. It also demanded fiscal autonomy for India and a declaration of Indian rights, and reaffirmed the Lucknow Pact (Congress-Muslim League agreement of 1916) as the preferred basis for the composition of the legislatures, federal and provincial.<sup>8</sup> In other words, "the principle of self-determination for all peoples, proclaimed by President Wilson in his Fourteen points" had moved the imagination of the intelligentsia throughout the world.

According to Dr. Rajendra Prasad, "the announcement made by the Secretary of State for India on behalf of the British Government in 1917 promising self-government by

stages occasioned differences of opinion amongst Indians' which became more and more acute as the result of investigations undertaken by the Secretary of State and the Viceroy became known and a Bill, which ultimately became the Government of Indian Act 1919." During this time of incubation of the Bill the war had ended in a victory for the British, and the feeling grew in India that as the pressure in Europe had relaxed on account of the successful termination of the war for Britain, the British attitude had changed for the worse towards India.<sup>9</sup>

The Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, in fact, "set the pattern which was to determine the actual administration of India from 1919 until the eve of independence in 1947." The Central Government at New Delhi underwent almost no change between 1919 and 1946; even the system by which the British Crown's paramountcy over Indian princely states was exercised changed only slightly in form but not in substance.<sup>10</sup>

But these defects were not considered by the Home Government and India Act of 1919 was implemented. According to Prof. A.B. Keith, "Indian politicians did not realize that they were being presented with an opportunity unique in character of proving their full capacity to exercise power wisely, and could only see the mass of restrictions imposed on the measure of self-government conceded."

### Notes

1. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru I, p. 29.
2. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru I, p. 30.
3. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru I, p. 41.
4. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru I, pp. 44-45.
5. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru I, p. 45.

## **CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT & NATIONAL MOVEMENT**

6. **Norman, Dorothy, Nehru I, p. 45.**
7. **Norman, Dorothy, Nehru I, p. 46.**
8. **Brecher, Michael, Nehru, p. 61.**
9. **Sitaramayyh, Pattabhi, H.I.N.C. (Vol. I) p. 2, Introduction.**
10. **Norman, Dorothy, Nehru I, p. 47.**

## THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA ACT 1919

### The Provincial Governments

According to this act there were two categories of subjects, Central and Provincial. Further, Provincial subjects were divided into 'reserved' and 'transferred.' The Governor was the head of both parts.

According to this Act, the Executive should consist of a Governor and a Council. The Council form of Government was very much desired by India. The general belief in India was that if the Indian administration was headed by a single man, pressure of work inevitably resulted in important business being transacted by Secretary without the knowledge of the Governor. A Council on the other hand would enable the Governor to get various points of view before chalking out his policy. Moreover, a Council would naturally pave the way for a responsible government which was the basic principle of new scheme. Hence all provinces were now headed by a Governor assisted by a Council.

As complete responsibility in a province could not be granted at once, a division was made of the function of provincial executive. Some functions should remain in official hand and some functions should be made over to the popular control. Thus there should be reserved and transferred subjects. It follows that the executive government of a province should consist of two parts—Councillors and Ministers. The Councillors were responsible to the British Parliament and the Ministers were responsible to the provincial legislature. The number of Councillors varied from two to four. The Councillors were ex-officio members of the provincial legislative Councils. They were appointed for five years by the British Government on the recommendation of the Governor of the province. They remained in office during the pleasure of the Crown. Indians were also appointed as Councillors. The Governor enjoyed a wide choice in this matter. The other part of the Council consisted of Governor and one member or more than one member according to the number of portfolio created and chosen by the Governor from the elected member of the legislature. They were called Ministers. Their number varied in a province from three to two. They were members of the executive Government but not of the executive Council. They were appointed for the life time of the legislature and their salaries were votable by the legislature.

The position of the Governor in relation to Ministers was not that of a Constitutional Governor bound to accept the decision of Ministers. The Governor's advice was brought to bear upon the administration, while on his part he was willing to accede to the wishes of the Minister to the farthest possible limit. If Ministers were wrong or acting from inexperience or making proposal which might create troubles in the provinces, the Governor had the right to interfere and veto all proposals. It was for him to appoint and dismiss the Minister. The proposal therefore did not envisage real responsible Government as practised in the self-governing dominions. Even the question of joint ministerial responsibility was not clearly mentioned and it remained vague throughout. In the original report it had been laid down that the Governor in relation to a transferred

subjects" "should be guided by Minister-in-charge of the subject." This was clearly a negation of joint responsibility. The Joint Select Committee therefore opposed it and on its recommendation this sentence was inserted, "In relation to transferred subjects, the Governor shall be guided by the advice of his Ministers" but even this clear statement in favour of joint responsibility was somewhat marred by the Instrument of Instructions issued to the Governor.

The relation between the two parts of Government also created difficulties. However well conceived the dyarchical plan may have been or might have been, it was obvious that there were many matters which could not be compartmentalized. The report had not envisaged a joint meeting for the common subjects but the need for such joint meeting was emphasised by Joint Select Committee. The advantage of such procedure was very great. The decision taken by one side would have the tacit approval of the other side and consequences of such joint decision would also be visualized. At the same time the role of the Governor became more difficult than before. He had to act as an arbitrator between the two parts of Government but this role was also one of great opportunity and honour.

### **Relation between the Executive and the Legislature**

The position of the Executive Government was even more difficult and upper chamber was outside the scheme. Hence a Government bill in the interest of General tranquility or for emergency might be turned down by the Legislative Council by an elected majority. The report had suggested certification by the Governor or reservation for the assent of the Home Government or vetoing by the Governor-General. The joint select Committee however had suggested a novel plan namely the formation of an Ad hoc Committee of the Legislative Council called the Grand Committee. It was representative of all elements in the Council and including a fair proportion of the official block. In Parliament there was strong opposition.

The idea being that the Governor in exercise of his special responsibility should under no circumstances take shelter behind a got-up majority. He should on the contrary even at the sacrifice of popularity face the alternative of a rejection and exercise his power of certification. In view of the possibility of a clash between the executive and the legislature, the general question of the relationship naturally assumed more and more importance. Experience showed that the anticipators of the reforms had been correct. The flaw of the dyarchical scheme lay not so much in the division of the Executive into reserved and transferred departments as in its inability to anticipate its reaction on the Legislative Council.

### Provincial Governor

While the Montagu-Chelmsford scheme contemplated the establishment of responsible government in provinces with elected members forming majority in the legislature, it did not thereby minimise the role of a Provincial Governor. On the contrary as the working of the new scheme showed, the responsibilities of Governor increased rather than diminished. He remained the direct representative of the Crown and head of the province in all matters of dignity and precedence. He remained also the actual and working head of the Executive presiding over its meeting and providing by influence advice and directing the cohesion between the two sides of Government. In one sense he remained an ex-officio member of each of the two committees of government. In the Executive Council as distinct from the Council of Ministers he used to take full part in the deliberation, override the majority if necessary and exercise his casting vote. On the Ministerial side, however, he came to exercise a slightly different power. Ministers were given greater freedom than Executive Councillors. They were of course warned of any dangers or difficulties, they might encounter if they stuck to any particular line of action in contravention of the Governor's advice but the responsibility of any action was generally fixed on Ministers. The idea behind this was that they might learn responsibilities, even if they might make mistake in discharging it. Moreover the

Govenor had a just relation between the two parts of Executive Government. Affairs belonging exclusively to the Ministerial department or exclusively to the Executive Council presented no difficulty but the cases were bound to arise in which both sides of the Executive Government were concerned or when cabinet decision had to be taken. Since the intention of the scheme was to effect the bifurcation of the Executive, a Cabinet in the real sense of the term was not contemplated. Hence when joint decision had to be taken all kinds of difficulties crept up, for example allocation of funds and it was then that the skill of the the Governor was put to the test. The history of the reform shows that on the whole the harmony between the two parts was well maintained and the Govenor played a vital part in bringing or maintaining this harmony. He could exercise both ordinary and extraordinary power and exercise of extraordinary power had been rather the exception than the general rule.

### Provincial Legislature

Only one Legislative Chamber, known as the Provincial Council, was provided in each Province. The authors of the Montford Reforms mentioned "We propose, that there shall be an enlarged Legislative Council, differing in size and composition from province to province, with a substantial majority, elected by direct election on a broad franchise, with such communal and special representation as may be necessary." Thus the Provincial Legislative Councils were set up under the Act of 1919.

The strength of the Legislative Councils were as follows:

Madras	.....	127
Bombay	.....	111
Bengal	.....	139
United Provinces		123
Punjab		93
Bihar and Orissa.		103

Central Provinces	70
Assam	50 <sup>r</sup>

The number of official members was not to exceed 20 per cent and those elected must make 70 per cent at least.<sup>11</sup>

The Communal electorates were extended from Muslims to Europeans, to Anglo-Indians and to Indian Christians. There were also Special constituencies for the universities except in Assam, for landholders and for commerce and industry including mining and planting.

The women had no political rights. A man of twenty-one years was a voter, provided he did not possess an unsound mind. A property qualification was required based on land revenue, on local rates, on municipal rates and on income tax.

The duration of the Councils was fixed at three years.

The Legislative Council being a large body and most members being inexperienced, it was necessary for the maintenance of the dignity of the house and for a proper conduct of a business to have the Governor as President of the Council, who might choose a Vice-President from the official members of the Council. Any member of the Council and not merely the asker of any original question should have the power to put the supplementary question. Any question not in the public interest might be disallowed by the Governor. Resolutions passed by the Council were not necessary binding. These might be Vetoed or disallowed by the Governor. If, however, the legislature persisted censure motion might be passed or grants refused in which case Ministers would have to resign.

The list of the transferred subjects would vary from province to province. For the purpose of determining these lists in the provinces, a Special Committee was set up to make an extensive tour and work in co-operation with the Committee for franchise and constituencies. Certain subjects might exist for legislation, which would be left to the Indian Government, while the administration of those subjects would be left to the Provincial Ministers. As a general rule subjects dealing with law and order should not be in the hands of Ministers. In spite of such division

of subjects, disputes occasionally arose. No list on transferred or reserved subjects could be exhaustive. There might be subject which relate with partly reserved or transferred subjects. In such cases and also in cases where peace and tranquility of a province was concerned or inter-provincial issues were involved, the Governor-in-Council or Governor-General in Council might intervene.

In such a context, the position of the Governor as a unifying agency assumed great importance. It was for him to decide in case of dispute whether a subject fell within the transferred or the reserved field and to indicate the appropriate portfolio.

### Central Executive

Unlike the Provincial Executive which were to be responsible to the Provincial Legislature at any rate on the transferred subjects, the Central Executive would act as before bearing responsibility not only to the Central Legislature for any subject but to the Viceroy and Secretary of State and finally to the British Parliament. The four formulas previously laid down had made it clear that there must be a relaxation of control from the bottom to the top in a diminishing degree. Hence it followed that the degree of the Secretary of State's control over the Government of India should be greater than that of the Government of India over the Provincial Government. At the same time, the control of Government of India over the Provincial Government should be maintained so to insure that in the matter of general tranquility and the safety of the state, the Central Government might act freely even if bills were passed by the Provincial legislature clearly of a subversive or revolutionary nature. Hence in spite of relaxation of control of the Government of India over provincial Government the authority of the Central Executive. was adequately maintained. Along with this there was no responsibility of the Central Executive to the Central Legislature. Hence the object or purpose of new reform was to make the Central Executive a strong and irresponsible Executive. The appointment of an Indian member in 1909 had been welcomed and recommendation was now made of an appointment of a second Indian member.

In this matter, however, care was to be taken that the selection was made on racial basis.

### Control of the Central Government Over the Province

The devolution of powers by the Central Government and the plan for the provincial autonomy did not however to any large measure weakened the control of the Central Government over the Province. The Central Executive retained by statute complete control over all matters on general administration. Information of all important matters was to be furnished to the Central Government. Central subjects such as All India service and statistics, even its operation in provinces were completely under the Central control. The transferred department of a province was specially important in respect of those obligations which the Government of India had incurred owing to India's membership of the league of Nations and I.L.O., obligations both financial and administrative. Central control over the reserved department of province was even more direct and complete. In the sphere of law and order the Home department of the Government of India was all powerful and ubiquitous (One who is present everywhere). The C.I.D. remained a Central department. All political movements, all seditions and agitations were the concern of the Central Government. But on the whole under the scheme of Provincial Autonomy the Central Government directed the provincial Government rather than interfered in the routine administration of provinces and when interferences became necessary, it happened on the recommendation of the province concerned. Co-ordination and not intervention is the business of the Central Government. This has been specially evident in the field of finance. Co-ordination in the field of Research has been frequent and fruitful.

The Imperial Council of agriculture and commerce, forest research institute at Dehradun, the veterinary research institute at Mukteshwar and similar other organisations were created by the Centre for the co-ordination of the Provinces and matters effecting the Transferred department of all Provinces were

frequently discussed by Conferences of Provincial Ministers summoned by the central Government. Over and above the power of the Governor-General in Council to give prior assent to Provincial bills and to issue ordinances effecting the whole of British India remained unimpaired.

### **The Central Legislature**

The Central Legislature consisted of two Houses the Council of State and the Legislative Assembly. The Council of State was the ordinary second chamber created by this Act.

#### **The Council of State**

According to prof. Keith the Council was composed of 19 official and 6 unofficial nominated members and 34 elected members, General 20, Muslim 10, Sikh 1, and European 3. The President was appointed by the Governor-General. He was nominated as a member of Council. So the Council was composed of 60 members. The franchise was fixed at a high property qualification. It was so high that there were only 17000 voters in the whole of the British India. The life of the Council was fixed for five years.

The Council of State enjoyed the same power as the Legislative Assembly. The budget was also presented to the Council on the same day, when it was presented to the Assembly. But it had no right to vote on grants, which was an exclusive privilege of the Assembly. The Money Bill could not originate in the Council of State.

The Council was a conservative body and so no progressive bills could be passed. It had power also to amend and reject proposals for raising revenues in India. No Second Chamber in the world possessed this category of power. It would have been better, if the Council of State would have been denied power of this sort.

#### **The Legislative Assembly**

The Legislative Assembly was a lower House and it consisted of 145 members. Out of 145, there were 41 nominated

(officials 26, non-officials 15) and elected 104. Of the latter 52 were returned for general constituencies, 30 for Muslim constituencies, 2 represented Sikhs, 7 landowners, 9 Europeans, and 4 represented Indian commerce. The voting qualification for the Assembly followed different pattern in different provinces. The voting qualifications were based on low property qualification. Only 10 per cent of the total adult population were voters for the Assembly.

The duration of the Assembly was fixed at three years. The Governor General could dissolve the Assembly earlier or he could extend its life beyond three years. The Governor-General could summon, prorogue and dissolve the house

Both houses had equal powers. If there was a dead-lock between the two houses, then the Governor-General had discretionary power to summon a joint session.

In finance it was required that the estimated annual revenue and expenditure should be laid before the legislature; all initiative of appropriation was reserved to the Governor-General.

The Governor-General had the power of certification. If any house did not pass any bill, then the Governor-General could certify that the passage of the Bill was essential for the safety, tranquility or interests of British India or some part thereof. After this certification the bill could become law if it was already accepted by one house. This Bill had other stages to cross.

In some cases his previous assent was required for introducing a bill in the Central Legislatures as well as in Provincial Legislatures. He could stop the discussion of any resolution or adjournment motion. He could also send back a bill for reconsideration and could reserve it for the consideration of His Majesty's Government.

The powers of the Legislature were thus expanded. The Assembly had the right to criticize the Government. But the Executive was not completely responsible to the legislature.

### Minor Provinces and Backward Tracts

The Government of India had direct control over the frontier provinces, the North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan and small areas as Coorg, Delhi and Ajmere-Marwara. Besides, the Governor-General could declare any part of the country as backward areas. The Executive could make regulation for those areas under this act. In accordance with these proposals certain areas, which were regarded backward tracts were demarcated. In Bihar and Orissa Angul was regarded as backward areas.

### Notes

! Keith, A.B. *A Constitutional History of India*, p. 250.

## THREE

### THE OPERATION OF THE REFORMS

There was lacking pre-requisite of a stable collective Ministry, namely the absence of well organised political party or parties. The enormous powers of Governors under the new scheme destroyed the independence, initiative and cohesion of the Ministers. They had also to look to the support of the official block from time to time and the prospect of their being elevated to the Executive Council made them tame advisers of Governors.

In Madras alone the reform operated successfully. The absenteeism of the Brahmins gave a clear majority to non-Brahmins and the Justice Party<sup>1</sup> came to operate the reform in the legislature with the support of a clear majority. The existence of a majority party developed a sense of joint responsibility in the Ministry which came to acknowledge the leadership of a Chief Minister. Joint meetings were called of the Members and Ministers. The advent of the Swarajists however and the inner dissension within Justice Party after 1926 made it necessary for the Ministry to seek the support of the official block

which they could easily avoid in the beginning. Nontheless the reforms worked satisfactorily in Madras. Even separate electorate did not weaken the Ministry as in other province because the Muslim element in Madras was small and had not organised itself into a Muslim block.

In Bengal on the other hand the reform ceased to operate after sometime. The non-cooperation movement of 1921 led to the absenteeism of Extremists from the election. Even among those who were returned, there were some who were highly critical of the Government especially on the Reserved side. But for some years at any rate the Ministry functioned though with difficulties with the support of the official block and the European non-officials. Joint meetings of Members and Ministers were sometimes held though for purposes of security and tranquility. Members of the Executive Council held meetings to the exclusion of Ministers. It was during this period however that the famous Calcutta Municipal Act was passed which completely democratised the Constitution of Calcutta Municipality, and established in the words of Surendra Nath Banerjee "a veritable Swaraj in the Government of the Second city of the Empire". In 1926 Bengal politics assumed another role. The failure of non-cooperation movement led to the rise of the Swarajists under C.R. Das and Pandit Moti Lal Nehru. The Swarajists obtained a clear majority in the Bengal Assembly and also in C.P.

The object of the new party was not to work the reform which they could but to wreck the Constitution from within and like the 'Parnellites' adopted obstructive tactics in order to prove the hollowness of the Dyarchy and to bring the work of the Council to a stand-still. In consequence the Bengal Ministry came to have a chequered career. Salaries of Ministers were again and again refused, which had to be certified by the Governor. Even when salary was granted, no Minister could be found to earn them. If a Muslim was appointed Minister, a Hindu colleague was difficult to find to work with him. The result was that from 1924 onwards there was hardly any stable Ministry, hardly any useful legislation and the Governor had

to re-transfer the transferred department to the reserved side.

In the Punjab the new Constitution though not going the way of Bengal was subjected to considerable strain. The Swarajists few in number could not wreck the Ministry. Parties in the province were mostly on communal lines and voting generally took place on communal lines. Nevertheless a composite party called the National Unionist Party operated the reforms and the Ministers were chosen from the three major communities, Sikh, Hindu and Muslim. Unlike Madras the Punjab did not secure clear elected majority and much of the legislation of the Punjab Assembly was blocked by communal differences.

### Causes of the Failure of Dyarchy

The political temper of the people when this new Constitution was launched (as revealed in the agitation over the Rowlatt Act culminating in the Amritsar Massacre of 1919), the inauguration of the Non-cooperation movement, the advent of the Swarajists afterwards with their wrecking policy and the general dislike of the Dyarchy system are greatly responsible for the failure of the reform from the very beginning. Beside the specific issue for example, finance which embittered relation between the two halves of a provincial executive, between the provincial government and the Central government, new factors appeared making the working of the system extremely difficult. The Joint Select Committee had insisted upon co-operation between the two halves of a provincial government and whatever useful legislation was done in the provinces was due to that but the real evil lay in the Dyarchy itself.

Members of the Executive Council had to depend on the Ministers for the smooth working of the reserved department. Members and Ministers therefore were thrown upon each other arms in the Council. They helped one another by voting, by abstaining from voting or speaking but this necessity for co-operation was looked at askance by the Council itself. The legislative Council had some responsibility for transferred side and none for the reserved side.

Irresponsible criticism of the Reserved side was very common. Ministers therefore with whatever followers they had, came to the rescue of the Executive Councillors. This was interpreted by the Council as a proof of undesirable collaboration between the two halves. Hence a Minister as soon as became a Minister was regarded as a Government man. Even if he had some followers in the Council before his selection as Ministers. After his selection as Ministers his misfortune was to have few friends or councillors than before. So he had to rely on the Members of the Reserved department and on the official block in the legislative Council. Hence irresponsible handling of essential legislative measures took place by the Council on the transferred side. Hence the Governor took over charge of the transferred department after sometime. All this went on in a vicious circle.

The real evil according to the Simon Commission was in the nature of Dyarchy itself. The report mentioned, "The intention of the Dyarchy was to establish within a certain definite range responsibility to an elected legislature. If this intention is not carried out, justification for the constitutional bifurcation is difficult to find."

One further reason for the failure was the Central control. The division of lists for Central and Provincial legislation left ample powers for supervision and control in the hand of the Central Government. The All-India Services functioned in the provinces under Central control.

Obligations incurred by the Government of India under the League Covenant and International Labour Organisation could be fulfilled in the Provinces only through Central intervention. Legislation in the transferred department of a province was also controlled by the Centre.

Above all the financial control by the Centre was specially galling to the province. The Meston Award came in for bitter criticism. It was difficult in the beginning to fix the provincial contribution to the Central Government. The provinces required more and more money for transferred department and if the contribution for a certain province was revised favourably, it was

interpreted by the other provinces as an act of favouritism. Conversely if the decision went against a province, it was interpreted as an interested decision.

It was further pointed out in the Simon Commission's report that the ten year limit inevitably made the scheme of 1919 unworkable. Under a temporary scheme like this even those who were willing to work the reform inevitably looked towards the future and there was little incentive to make this scheme a success. Thus as early as 1921 barely a year after the inauguration of the reform, the Central Legislative Assembly passed a comprehensive resolution demanding full responsible Government in the province. Similar resolutions were passed in the following year. Every community was thinking of future, not of the present. Communal rivalries were intensified.

Political party did not develop on normal lines. Even the Swarajists who formed a compact party had no mind to work the reform. On the contrary they tried to wreck the reform in order to have a better scheme afterwards. It would have been better therefore if there would have been an elastic system which might change according to changing time than a rigid and temporary scheme which no one was willing to work.

### Notes

1. Dr. T.M. Nair had started the anti-Brahmin movement.

## FOUR

### THE AMRITSAR TRAGEDY

The first world war came to an end in 1918. The Indian leaders demanded self-government for the country. But Edwin Montagu, the Secretary of State proposed a system known as Dyarchy. While the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms were made public, the next was published of what was to be generally known as the Rowlatt Act. There were certain factors behind the Rowlatt Act. The Government of India had armed itself with the Defence of India Act in the course of the first world war. This act provided India's colonial rulers with "wide arbitrary powers, was to lapse after six months of the termination of the war."<sup>1</sup>

The Government did not like to give up this power. So a case was sought to be made out to justify the enactment of a new law. Sir Reginald Craddock, the Home Member of the Government of India summed up the complex political situation in this way; "Sedition in India is like the tides which erode a coast-line as the sea encroaches. The last high tide was in

1907-1908. The tide then went out but it is flowing in now rapidly and it will reach a point now higher than it ever reached before. We must have dam in order lest it inundate sound land.”<sup>3</sup>

The Government of India therefore constituted Revolutionary Conspiracies Inquiry Committee in 1912. The Committee was presided over by Justice Rowlatt of United Kingdom and consisted of four members, two of whom were Indian and two British officials in India.

The Committee had to enquire into the nature and extent of subversive activities most of it emanating from the police. On 30th April, 1918, Rowlatt delivered his report which was accepted by the British Government. It is their recommendation which has been carried out in the Rowlatt Act. This recommendation was announced in January 1919. The national leaders interpreted it as the death warrant of civil liberties.

But the Viceroy did not consider this opposition and the notorious Rowlatt Bills made their appearance in February 1919. The bill consisted of two parts. One was a temporary measure intended to deal with the situation arising from the expiry of the Defence of India Rules. The second measure was meant to make a permanent change in the criminal law of the land. The possession of a seditious document with mere intention to publish or circulate was made punishable with imprisonment.<sup>3</sup>

Of the Rowlatt bills which “sought to arm the Executive with special powers to suppress political violence, Gandhi wrote that they were in fact ‘designed to rob the people of all freedom’. Pandit Nehru wrote that a wave of anger greeted them all over India and even the Moderates joined in this and opposed the measure with all their might. Indeed there was universal opposition on the part of the Indians, of all shades of opinion.<sup>4</sup>

The Rowlatt bills were introduced into the Imperial Legislative Council by the Home Member, Sir William Vincent. Gandhi reacted against these bills and a small conference consisting of Vallabhbhai Patel, Mrs. Naidu, Horinman Umar

Sobhani, Shankar Lal Bunker and Indu Lal Yajnik was held at the Sabarmati Ashram. A satyagraha pledge was drafted by Gandhi and was signed on February 24, 1919 by all present. It said "Being conscientiously of opinion that the bills known as the Indian Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill No. 1 of 1919 and the Criminal Law (Emergency Powers) Bill No. II of 1919 are unjust, subversive of the principles of liberty and justice and destructive of the elementary rights of individuals on which the safety of the community as a whole and the state itself is Based, we solemnly affirm that in the event of these bills becoming law and until they are withdrawn, we shall refuse civilly to obey these laws and such laws as a committee, to be here after appointed, may think fit, and we further affirm that in this struggle, we will faithfully follow truth and refrain from violence to life, person or property."<sup>6</sup> Gandhi described these bills as "an unmistakable symptom of a deepseated disease in the governing body."

While on the one hand the agitation against the Rowlatt Committee's report gathered volume and intensity, the Government grew more and more determined to give effect to its recommendation. The bill was introduced on 6th February. The Select Committee report which was signed by the official members only, was presented on 1st March. It was taken up for consideration on 12th March and the next three days, the Viceroy forced the Council to sit continuously until late at night to dispose of the 150 and odd amendment proposed by Indian members.<sup>6</sup> As a result of which the Rowlatt Act was passed on March 18, 1919 in spite of the opposition of the non-official members thereof and by sheer Government vote of 35 to 20 Indians.

Honourable Mr. B.N. Sharma resigned in protest and other resignations followed soon after. Mr. M.A. Jinnah in tendering his resignation wrote the following letter to the Viceroy. The letter went on : "The passing of the Rowlatt bill by the Government of India and the assent given to it by Your Excellency as Governor-General against the will of the people has severely shaken the trust reposed by them in British justice.... I, therefore, as a protest against the passing of the

'bill and the manner in which it was passed tender my resignation as a member of the Imperial Legislative Council. In my opinion the Government, that passes or sanctions such a law in times of peace forfeits its claim to be called a civilised Government and I still hope that the Secretary of State for India Mr. Montagu will advise His Majesty to signify his disallowance to this Black Act.'" Subsequently early in April 1919 Hon'ble Rai Bahadur B.D. Shukul, Pt. M.M. Malaviya and Mr. Mazharul Haque also resigned.

But despite all opposition, the bills became law on 21st March, 1919. Gandhiji from his sick bed had urged the Viceroy not to give his consent to the Rowlatt bills. The appeal was ignored as others had been and Gandhiji took the leadership in his hand as first act of Indian agitation against alien regime. Popular agitation over the Black Bill was intense. It started from Madras and Bombay and gradually spread over the whole country. On March 18, Gandhi addressed a large meeting on the Madras beach. He asked the people to sign the pledge of satyagraha and stick to it. On March 23, Gandhi called upon the people of India to mobilise in thousands and convince the Government of what they were to expect in the near future.

Thus Gandhi came back into the centre of affairs and formed a satyagraha society, whose members were pledged to disobey the law as a symbol of passive resistance. On 25th February 1919, Miles Irving, the Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar, an I.C.S. learnt that Gandhi and a group of followers had taken a vow of satyagraha at a meeting in Ahmedabad. To galvanise mass support for this act of defiance, Gandhi proclaimed March, 30 as satyagraha day, a day of mass meetings to protest against the hated legislation.<sup>8</sup> The date was subsequently changed to 6th April.

Miles Irving became aware that Dr. Satyapal and Dr. Kitchlew had taken a satyagraha oath and formed a local committee in support. Dr. Kitchlew had been practising at the Amritsar Bar in 1915. Dr. Satyapal had held the Viceroy's Commission as a lieutenant in the Indian Medical Service. On 6th February, Satyapal and Kitchlew called a meeting to

discuss the Rowlatt Bills. Second and third meetings were held on the 13th and 28th February. Irving had attended these meetings and he had been keeping close eye on Dr. Kitchlew. Gandhi's revised date could not reach Delhi and the Punjab observed Hartal on 30th March. At Delhi Swami Shraddhanand, the great leader of the Arya Samaj addressed a huge audience in the famous Jamma Masjid. The police and military tried to disperse a mammoth procession and shot at it, killing some people. Swami Shraddhanand was killed at Chandni Chowk by a Muslim fanatic. The whole country was stunned by the incident.<sup>9</sup> There was mourning in Delhi on 31st March. At Amritsar a meeting had been called on 30th March and Kitchlew was the main speaker.

The Rowlatt Act Agitation mobilised public opinion and roused middle class including shopkeeping and trading classes as well as the educated professional classes to stage vehement protest against the official design to take away the liberties of Indians. Local discontents, national issues, repressive policy and the legislative-measures of the Lt. Governor Michael O'Dwyer had already alienated the sympathies of the middle classes, artisans, handicrafts men and factory hands and the Rowlatt Act channelised and crystallised their dissatisfaction and discontent. Hence this agitation had a wide social base. It became violent because of the provocation offered by the authorities. Besides, the people had not been adequately prepared for the removal of Mahatma Gandhi or the local leaders.

The day passed peacefully and Irving reported this meeting to Sir Michael O'Dwyer, I.C.S., the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab. He was an Irishman and he had spent his thirty-five years in the Punjab in various capacities. With the instruction of O'Dwyer, orders were served on Kitchlew restricting him from speaking like Satyapal, who had been prohibited on 29th March. Meanwhile the news spread that hartal would be observed on 6th April. Irving did not like the hartal. But the hartal was observed on 6th and it passed off peacefully. As the result of this hartal, Irving was disturbed. He wrote a letter

to Mr. A.J W. Kitchlew, the Commissioner of Lahore, pressing urgently for reinforcement of troops.

The Punjab Government perhaps sensed the coming storm. The hartal had been observed not only at Amritsar but also at other forty-five towns. Mass movements were galling to Sir Michael O'Dwyer.<sup>10</sup> On April 8, Mahatma Gandhi left Bombay for Delhi on a mission of peace. On his way to Delhi at Palwal, he was served with an order not to enter the Punjab and Delhi. Mahatma Gandhi did not comply with this order and he was arrested at Palwal station on April 9, 1919. He was brought to Surat on April 11th. The news of Gandhi's arrest had incensed the people.

Sir Michael O'Dwyer liked to maintain peace in the Punjab. So on the 9th April, the Government ordered the deportation of Kitchlew and Satyapal and their internment in Dharmshala, another district in the Punjab. At noon April 10, the news of their arrest spread in the city of Amritsar.

Hartal was declared and the people marched in a procession towards the Deputy Commissioner to demand the release of Dr. Satyapal and Dr. Kitchlew. Police barred their way. A skirmish occurred and a few demonstrators were killed. Bitter and angry the people marched back to the city and retaliated with arson and violence in which five Europeans were killed. On Friday, the 11th, the shops remained closed and no business was done. But there were no more looting or arson. Such was the situation at 9 p.m., when Brigadier General Dyer, Commander of the Jullundur Brigade, drove up to the railway station in his car with captain Briggs, his Brigade Major.

As General Dyer played a crucial role in subsequent events, so it is essential to break off the main narrative to introduce him. He was at this time fifty-four and he had served in the Indian army for thirty-three years. According to Arthur Swinson, he was a man of strong personality, whom people seemed to either like or detest. When the trouble started in March 1919 he was on leave. He joined his post on 6th April. He found a code message from Divisional Head-quarters on 7th warning

him that trouble was expected. On 8th and 9th, he found the same information. Then on 9th, afternoon, he received an order from General Beynon to proceed at once to Amritsar and take command there.

So Dyer came to Amritsar on the same day. His duty was to maintain law and order in the city. He prepared a proclamation for publication. The proclamation was as follows :

"The inhabitants of Amritsar are hereby informed that if they cause damage to any property or will commit any acts or violence in the environment of Amritsar, it will be taken for granted that since actions are due to incitement in Amritsar city and offenders will be punished according to military law.

(Signed) F.C. Briggs  
Captain Bridgade Major."

This proclamation was handed over to the police for publication and how many people in Amritsar actually saw, it was not clear. According to Tendulkar the proclamation which was in English was not even read in many parts of the city. He issued another proclamation on 13th April. According to this proclamation, no person residing in the city was permitted or allowed to leave the city in his own car, hired conveyance or on foot without a pass from one of the officers posted at Amritsar. So no person residing in Amritsar city was permitted to leave his house after 8 p.m.<sup>22</sup>

This proclamation was read throughout the city. Dyer had himself moved through the city. But simultaneously it had been announced by a civilian that a meeting would be held at the Jallianwala bagh at 4.30 p.m. at which Lal Kanhaya Lal, the senior lawyer in Amritsar, would preside. Dyer received the news at 1 p.m. At 4 p.m. he received news that a meeting was assembled at the Jallinwala Bagh.

A public meeting had been called at Jallianwala Bagh at 4.30 p.m. on Sunday, the 13th April, 1919. This day coincided with the Baisakhi festival, the Hindu New Year. Bagh means garden and the Jallianwala Bagh consisted of 200 yards

by 100. The main entrance was by a narrow passage on the north side and there were four or five places where people could get out, one at a time. Prof. V.N. Datta in his scholarly work "Jallianwala Bagh" has upheld the view that most of the people attended the meeting without any apprehension, far less definite knowledge, of the terrible consequences that were in store for them. Dyer took no measures to prevent the meeting. He set off with Briggs in his car. When he arrived at the Bagh, he had ninety men with him.

The meeting at that time was being addressed by a speaker named Durga Das. Dyer had with armoured cars and troops and without giving any warning ordered the troops to fire till the ammunition was exhausted. There were 10,000 unarmed persons in the meeting. There were 1,650 rounds of fire opened on the crowds. According to Government figures, 379 people killed and 200 wounded.

The word Amritsar became a synonym for massacre. According to Gandhiji Plassey laid the foundation of the British Empire, Amritsar had shaken it. Bad as this was, there were other and even more shameful deeds all over the Punjab. Speaking as the President of the All-India Moderates Conference, Sir P.S. Sivaswamy Ayyar summed up the horrors of Dyer regime: "The wholesale slaughter of hundreds of unarmed men at Jallianwala Bagh without giving the crowd an opportunity to disperse, the indifference of General Dyer to the condition of hundreds of people who were wounded in the firing of machine-guns into crowds who had dispersed and taken to their heels, the flogging of men in public, the order compelling thousands of students to walk sixteen miles a day for rollcalls and the arrest and detention of 500 students and professors are some of the many incidents of the administration of martial law which created a reign of terror in the Punjab and have shocked the public."<sup>23</sup>

According to Prof. V.N. Datta, one of the main causes primarily responsible for the violent disorders in the Punjab leading to the great tragedy of Jallianwala Bagh was the various types of coercive measures. Sometimes amounting to innumerate brutality ... adopted by the Government of the Punjab under

Sir Michael O' Dwyer for the recruitment of soldiers during the first world war. O'Dwyer all along stoutly denied that there was any oppression and the Hunter Committee also in a way supported him by holding that recruitment had nothing to do with the disturbances. But Prof. Dutta has succeeded in proving that the charges of coercion and suppression were at the root of that grim tragedy.

It was the most horrible massacre of modern Indian history. C.F. Andrews had described this slaughter "as a cold and calculated massacre". The Westminster Gazette on the massacre of Amritsar expressed its opinion: "This amazing narrative will recall to the inhabitants of the United Kingdom chiefly the episode of the early German occupation of Belgium and old "Peterloo massacre." If he is not condemned by the nation the nation itself will be condemned by the civilised world."<sup>13</sup>

There was general resentment in India against this massacre. The national protest was voiced by Rabindranath Tagore, who renounced his knight-hood and condemned the atrocities in a letter to the Viceroy, dated May 30, 1919.

The All-India Congress Committee, meeting at Allahabad, on June 8, demanded inquiry into the martial-law atrocities in the Punjab. A committee was appointed to arrange for the conduct of an inquiry into the Punjab but he could not get permission from the Viceroy to visit the Punjab. In pursuance of the Congress resolution Swami Shraddhanand, Motilal Nehru and Malaviya proceeded to the Punjab in July to hold inquiry.

The Government of India announced in October 1919 the personnel of the Commission of Inquiry with Lord Justice Hunter as its Chairman. The Hunter Committee or the Committee to investigate the recent disturbances in Bombay, Delhi and in the Punjab, their causes and the measures taken to cope with them was set up by the Governor-General in Council with the approval of the Secretary of State for India, Edwin Montagu. It began its hearings on 29th October and altogether sat for forty-six days, eight of them in Delhi, twenty-nine in Lahore, six in Ahmedabad and three in Bombay. The President of the

Committee was Lord Hunter, formerly Solicitor-General for Scotland in the Asquith administration.

Hunter was supported by Mr. Rankin, Mr. Dice, Sir George Barrow, Mr. Thomas Smith and three Indian Lawyers. They were Pandit Jagat Narayan, Sir Chimanlal Setalvad and Sir Sultan Ahmad Khan. The Committee started its working. In course of cross examination by Setalvad, Dyer confessed that had the passage been sufficient to allow the armoured cars to go in, he would have opened fire with the machine guns. By this admission, Dyer spoiled his own case. The Hunter Committee finished its work and submitted a report consisting of a hundred and forty-five pages to the Government of India on 8th March, 1920. In short the Hunter Committee had condemned Dyer's action.<sup>14</sup>

The Government of India sent the Hunter Report to Edwin Montagu on 3rd May, 1920, with a long covering letter. At the very end of the letter, the Government turned to the question of Dyer mentioning that his action was dictated by a stern though misconceived sense of duty. The report further said that Dyer acted beyond the necessity of the case.

The Hunter report together with the above correspondence was published on 27th May and for the first time Dyer was able to read the text of the document condemning him. The Government of India under the orders of Montagu relieved Dyer of his command subsequently. Dyer returned to England.

The Great Debate took place on the floor of both Houses of Parliament on Dyer's conduct. But both Houses deplored the conduct of General Dyer.<sup>15</sup>

As time passed, Dyer's physical condition deteriorated. In November 1921 he had a stroke which brought on a partial paralysis, and he retired to the peace of the West country. His health failed slowly. He had another stroke on July 11, 1926, which robbed him of speech and he died on Saturday, 23rd July, 1926.

Thus General Dyer could not recover from the fatal mistake of his life. The Amritsar Massacre was the worst crime in the

annals of the British rule in India, a massacre of defenceless people who could not even seek recovery from the merciless attack. Michael O'Dywer was shot dead by Udham Singh on 13th March, 1940, at the Caxton Hall London, where he had been to give lecture on Afghanistan. Thus two of the main actors of this tragic drama met their end. But the Jallianwala Bagh still shocks Indian sentiment.

To-day the Jallianwala Bagh is a national memorial. The Bagh is a show place now. The whole Bagh after 1947 has been transformed into a memorial garden. It was dedicated by Dr. Rajendra Prasad, former President of the Indian Republic on 13th April, 1961, exactly forty-two years after the massacre.

### Notes

1. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru I, p. 47
2. Ibid, Nehru I, p. 45.
3. Tendulkar, D.G Mahatma I, p. 249.
4. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru I, pp 48-49.
5. Tendulkar, D G., Mahatma I, p. 241.
6. The Indian Annual Register, 1919, I p. 33.
7. Ibid, 1919, I, pp. 33-34.
8. Ibid., pp. 33-34.
9. Tendulkar, D.G., Mahatma I, p. 248.
10. The Indian Annual Register, 1919, p. 38.
11. Swinson, Arthur, Sunset, p. 43.
12. Tendulkar, D.G. Mahatma I, pp. 258-259.
13. The Indian Annual Register, 1919, p. 378.
14. Swinson, Arthur, Sunset, p. 132.
15. Ibid., Sunset, p. 155.

## FIVE

### **A BACKWARD LOOK AT BRITISH POLICY (OR) MUSLIM COMMUNALISM IN INDIAN POLITICS 1920**

Till the establishment of the British rule the Muslims had felt no rivalry towards the Hindus. They were the ruler of the country. But after 1887 the situation showed a change. It is interesting to trace British policy since 1857 in its relation to the communal question. After 1857 the heavy hand of the British fell more on the Muslims than on the Hindus. They considered the Muslims more aggressive and militant and therefore more dangerous. The Muslims also did not get the new education and had few jobs under the Government.

There was the growth of the new nationalism in the country. The upper-class English speaking intelligentsia were the members of the Indian National Congress. The Government encouraged the Muslims more to keep away from the new nationalist platform. The Government received help in this task from Sir Syed Ahmed Khan. Syed Ahmed was a great admirer of

the British. He had been to England and Europe. He had been impressed with the British way of living and he wrote a letter in 1869 from London giving his impressions. In one of these he stated : "All good things, spiritual and worldly, which should be found in man, have been bestowed by the Almighty on Europe, and especially on England."<sup>1</sup> Sir Ahmed's mind had been poisoned by Theodore Beck, the Principal of the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College, Aligarh. Under his evil influence, Syed Ahmed condemned the Congress

Further he said that India contained two or more nations and Hindus would be absolute masters as no 'Mohammedan Emperor ever was. Due to his speeches perhaps all leading Muslim institutions and personalities did not join the Indian National Congress.

Syed Ahmed also laid the foundation of the Annual Muslim Educational Conference in 1886. This Conference became a forum for the dissemination of Muslim political opinions. The anti-Congress activities of Syed Ahmed received a further impetus by the establishment in 1893 of the Mohammedan Defence Association of Upper India. Syed Ahmed's work was continued by Sayyid Ahmed Bralvi (1736-1831). Bralvi liked to make Islam strong in India.<sup>2</sup> Maulvi Vilayat Ali and his brother Maulvi Inayat Ali also did the same unpleasant work.

The Muslim leaders also tried to raise the financial and education of their communities. The Aga Khan soon emerged as the leader of the Muslims. The Aga Khan was an exceedingly wealthy prince and the religious head of a sect. He was very much a Persona Grata from the British point of view. He had a close association with the British ruling classes. He had also feudal traditions. As late as 1902, the Aga Khan persuaded Muslims to take to industry and commerce and also to receive the English education. So the Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College had been established at Aligarh in 1875. It must be mentioned that many Hindus helped this institution with money. The rulers of Indian States, like the Maharaja of Patiala and Vizia-nagaram and several middle class Hindus donated the money to this college.<sup>3</sup>

The causes of the Hindu-Muslim riot must be traced from this period. The riot took place in 1893. Riots occurred in the district of Azamgarh and other parts of the North-West provinces and certain parts of Bihar, in the state of Junagarh, in Kathiawar, and in the city of Bombay. At Poona, the Hindu-Mohammedan riot took place on September 12, 1894. The cow-killing also took place in the neighbourhood of Calcutta.<sup>4</sup> The causes of these riots were that the Muslim leaders did not allow the Muslims to join the Congress. The Aligarh School poisoned the Hindu-Muslim relation. Several Englishmen were at the back of the Muslims, such as Beck 1885-1899, Morrison 1900-1905 and Archibald 1905-1910. "The activities of Sir Syed Ahmed and Mr. Beck" observes Professor Gurumukh Nihal Singh, "led to the estrangement of the Hindus and the Muslims". Sayyid Sharf Uddin spoke in 1906 at Dacca: 'Muslims progress portends progress by becoming and continuing a staunch Musalman'. Thus all Muslim leaders asked the Muslims to work against the interest of the Congress. They were joined in their efforts by the British. The British followed the policy of 'divide and rule'. The British felt at a very early date to win the Muslim population. They also liked that the Muslims should receive the English education also. Therefore the Government granted land for the site of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College, Aligarh. The Muslims soon fell under the clutch of the English. They appreciated the division of Bengal. While the intelligentsia of Bengal, the Englishmen and the Muhammadans joined hands to oppose the rising tide of patriotic feeling.

### Factors Behind the Formation of the Muslim League

Thus the English liked that the Muslims should form a separate political organisation. The Muslims also felt the necessity of such a political organisation. Maulvi Mushtaque Husain, Nawab Viqar-ul Mulk, the Aga Khan and Nawab Salim Ullah Khan moved in this matter. It was due to the effort of Nawab Salim Ullah Khan of Dacca that the Muslim League came into being in 1906.<sup>5</sup> Jawaharlal observed in this way: 'started in 1906 with British encouragement and in order

to keep away the new generation of Moslems from the National Congress, it (the Muslim League) remained a small upper-class organisation controlled by feudal elements.<sup>6</sup> Thus, the Chief forces behind the establishment of the Muslim League were the Muslim desire to carve out a separate political existence and the British fear of national feeling in the country.

### The Simla Deputation

The Government contemplated the enlargement of the Indian Legislative Councils. The Muslims liked to safeguard their interests. Lord Minto desired to check the nationalistic tendencies of the country. So the Simla Deputation was engineered. A. C. Banerjee is right when he says, "it is difficult to accept professor Coupland's statement.....there is no evidence to suggest that the deputation (1906) was in any sense engineered."<sup>7</sup>

The facts of the case are that Archbold, the Principal of the M.A.O. College, Aligarh took a keen interest in this matter. Mr. Archbold asked Nawab Muhsin-ul-Mulk to despatch a representation to the Government. He stressed that loyalty should greatly be stressed in the address to be presented to the Viceroy. Nawab Mohsin-ul-Mulk enlisted the support of the leading Muslims of India and a deputation was formed. The Aga Khan took its leadership. The address presented by the Aga Khan to the Viceroy (Lord Minto) On October 1, 1906 was signed by "nobles, ministers of various states, great landowners, lawyers, merchants and.....many other of His Majesty's Mohammedan subjects."<sup>8</sup>

The Chief purpose of the address was that the Muslim rights should well be protected. The deputationists requested the viceroy for recognition of Muslim political status. Thus they demanded political concessions separately.

The Viceroy assured the deputationists that adequate attention would be paid to the Muslim point of view. He said among other things, 'Please do not misunderstand me; I make no attempt to indicate by what means the communities can be obtained, but I am as firmly convinced as I believe you to be,

that any electoral representation in India would be doomed to mischievous failure which aimed at granting a personal enfranchisement regardless of beliefs and traditions of the communities composing the population of this continent.”

The deputationists were much satisfied and the Muslim League was founded at Dacca, on December 30, 1906. When the All-India Muslim League had been founded, at that time its future leader, M.A. Jinnah, was private secretary to the great Parsi Congress.

**Leader, Dada Bhai Naoroji :** The three main objectives of the Muslim League were : “(a) To promote, amongst the Musalmans of India, feelings of loyalty to the British Government and to remove any misconception that may arise as to the intentions of Government with regard to Indian measures. (2) To protect and advance the political rights of the Mohammedans of India and respectfully represent their needs and aspirations to the Government, and (c) To prevent the rise among the Mohemmadans of any feeling of hostility towards other communities without prejudice to the other aforesaid objects of the League.”<sup>10</sup>

The British officers from now on showed their weaknesses for the Muslim League. They also began to play up of differences between Hindus and Muslims. Motilal’s letter to Jawaharlal of March 25, 1909, makes it clear. The letter ran in this way: “An open rupture between the leaders of the two communities is imminent. Nothing short of a miracle can save it... ...Our Anglo-Indian friends have distinctly scored in this matter. The President of the Allahabad Congress, Sir William Wedderburn called a Hindu-Muslim Conference on unity in 1910 but the Conference did not succeed.

The next Hindu-Muslim Conference was held at Rajas Hotel, Allahabad on January 1, 1911. Gopal Krishna Gokhale had played a leading role in summoning the Conference. The Muslim minority wanted to dictate to the majority in the name of democracy. The Congress also liked to give concessions to the Muslims.

Another momentous event occurred in 1912 and that was the

annulment of the partition of Bengal. The Muslims did not like that the partition of Bengal should be set aside by the British Government. They were depressed and perturbed at the re-union of the two Bengals. Under these circumstances the next annual session of the Congress was held at Calcutta under Salim Ullah Khan. In 1913, the goal of the Muslim League was enlarged to include the attainment of self government.

It was in 1913 that Jinnah decided to join the Muslim League. During the same period Congress placed on record its warm appreciation of the adoption by the "Muslim League of the ideal of self-government for India, within the British Empire."<sup>11</sup>

The first world war broke out in 1914. Under the Defence of India Act, several prominent Muslim leaders were arrested. Now the Muslim League felt the necessity of coming closer with the Congress. Annie Besant also made attempt to unite the two major communities of India. Under these circumstances the Lucknow session of the Muslim League was held in 1916 under the Presidentship of Jinnah. The Congress also called its annual session at the same place. The Congress and the Muslim League adopted a joint scheme of reforms. The Congress assented to the system of separate electorates for the Muslims. The Congress hoped that the system of separate electorate would be a temporary phase and after a time, joint electorates would be introduced. But as subsequent events proved, this could not be and separate electorate proved to be a curse for the unity of the country. It has been said that the system of separate electorate paved the way for the formation of Pakistan.

With the close of the first world war, the Congress and the Muslim League under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi took part in the Non-cooperation movement of 1920.

**Notes**

1. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru I, pp. 301-302.
2. Bahadur, Lal The Muslim League, p. 11:
3. Bahadur, Lal, The Muslim League, pp. 15-16.
4. The Calcutta Review, 1896, pp. 215-216.
5. Bahadur, Lal, The Muslim League, p. 31.
6. Nehru, Jawaharlal, The Discovery of India p. 331.
7. The Indian Constitutional Documents, Volume II, p. 205.
8. Faruqi Ziya-Ul-Hasan, The Deoband School, p. 48 (F.N.).
9. John Buchan's, Lord Minto : A Memoir, p. 244.
10. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru I, p. 38.
11. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru I, p. 39

## SIX

### **INCEPTION OF GANDHIAN ERA OF CONGRESS, KHILAFAT COMMITTEE AND NON-COOPERATION MOVEMENT**

Gandhiji's leadership became firmly established in Congress in 1920. The Indian Nationalist Movement then entered upon an entirely new phase. Its middle-class, bourgeois-character was almost entirely transformed. The masses became strongly attracted to it.

The Khilafat question was based on the supposed assurance given by Lyod George, as British Prime Minister to the Indian Muslims during world war I. He gave a pledge that the integrity of Turkey would be maintained and that the sacred places of Islam would remain with the acknowledged head of the Muslim religion.<sup>1</sup> The Turkish Sultan had been regarded by the Muslim world as their Caliph or spiritual head. On this assurance, the Muslims of India consequently gave their loyal support to the British during the war. After the war, however, the promises that had been made were unfulfilled. The

Ottoman Empire was dismembered. Turkey was deprived of her Arabian provinces. India's Muslims considered it as a breach of faith.

The Khilafat movement began from October 27, 1919. The Muslim leaders wanted help from the Indian National Congress. The Ali brothers (prominent Muslim leaders) joined the Congress.

M. Mohammed Ali went off soon on a Khilafat deputation to Europe. In India the Khilafat Committee came more and more under Gandhiji's influence. He thought with his ideas of non-violent non-cooperation. The Moulvis and Ulemas were in the Khilafat Committee. The political and the Khilafat movements developed side by side during 1920, both going in the same direction and eventually joining hands with the adoption by the Congress of Gandhiji's non-violent non-cooperation.

On August 1, 1920. Gandhi started the non-cooperation movement by a letter to Lord Chelmsford, the Viceroy surrendering his Kaiser-i-Hind<sup>2</sup> gold medal and titles. The treaty of Sevres was signed on August 10, 1920. The Turkish Empire was partitioned and divided. The Muslims disliked the treaty. Mahatma Gandhi championed their cause and now the Khilafat Committee agreed to start this Gandhian movement. It was not easy for the Moulvis to grasp the idea, but they agreed, making it clear that they did so as a policy and not as a creed.<sup>3</sup>

By the end of August 1920, Gujarat political Conference passed the non-cooperation resolution. The issue of non-cooperation was discussed at the special session of the Congress held in calcutta on September 4-9. Lala Lajpat Rai was the President of the Congress. Mrs. Besant, Pandit Malviya, Vijayaraghavachari, Motilal Nehru, C.R. Das and M.A. Jinnah. The draft of the non-cooperation resolution was prepared by Gandhi at the request of Shaukat Ali. Gandhi did not know who would support the resolution. This resolution had been prepared with a view to obtaining redress of the Punjab and the Khilafat wrongs. Vijayaraghavachari and Pandit Motilal

Nehru wanted an inclusion of the demand for Swaraj in the resolution. Gandhi accepted this suggestion.

Gandhi moved a lengthy resolution. He had mentioned in the resolution that (a) people would surrender titles and honorary offices, (b) they would refuse to attend Government durbars, (c) they would withdraw their children from schools and colleges, boycott British courts, and (d) they would boycott foreign cloth.<sup>4</sup>

The resolution was hotly opposed and Bepin Chandra Pal moved an amendment, which was supported by Das. So the voting took place and Lala Lajpat Rai superintended the operation, which lasted for six hours. The non-cooperation resolution was adopted on September 9 by 1855 votes against 837. All Muslim members, except Jinnah, voted with Gandhi, while prominent non-Muslim nationalists supported Das.

While explaining the details of the programme Gandhi said : 'I do not rely merely upon the lawyer class or highly educated men to carry out all the stages of non-cooperation. My hope is more with the masses, so far as the later stages of non-cooperation are concerned.'

After the Nagpur session of the Indian National Congress in December 1920, where he had finally won the battle of leadership, the Mahatma was faced with immediate problems. During the last quarter of 1920, Gandhi preached the triple boycott. He put forward concrete proposals for the advancement of Swadeshi. He also told the people that if his programme was followed, the country would attain Swaraj within a year. On September 22, 1920, he explained, what he meant by the triple boycott of colleges and schools, boycott of Council and Swadeshi (manufacture our own cloth). Gandhi toured southern and northern India accompanied by the Ali brothers. Now the Government reacted and Government published a proclamation. The people were warned that they could be arrested if their words might stir up revolt. Gandhi asked the people to maintain peace and to take to full-pledged non-co-operation movement.

The session of the Indian National Congress was held at Nagpur on December 26, 1920. Mr. Vijayaraghavachari, known as the Grand Old Man of the Congress, was the President of the session. C.R. Das of Bengal, Khaparde and Kelkar of Maharashtra were there to oppose Gandhi. Enough pressure was put on Gandhi for withdrawal of boycott of courts and the ban on practising pleaders. But Gandhi did not accept it. The Congress passed the resolution of non-violent non-cooperation. Another resolution was passed, which read thus : "That the object of the Congress is the attainment of Swaraj by the people of India by all legitimate and peaceful means."<sup>5</sup>

The Congress now represented the masses and became a revolutionary body under the leadership of Gandhi.

The non-violent non-cooperation movement started from 1921. The liberals did not like the movement and they became Ministers and high officials under the Act of 1919. The Duke of Connaught, uncle of King George V came to India to assuage the resentment in India. The King expressed sorrow for the Punjab tragedy. But the Congress under Gandhi's leadership boycotted His Highness's visit.

The Non-cooperation movement progressed rapidly in Bengal. On an appeal by C.R. Das, 3,000 students went on strike in Calcutta. Boys and girls deserted schools. Gandhi also went to Calcutta. He opened the National College in Calcutta on February 4, 1920. He visited Patna and the Bihar Vidyapith was inaugurated. In less than four months the National Colleges were started in Patna, Aligarh, Ahmedabad, Bombay, Benares, and Delhi. Jamia Millia Islamia or the National Muslim University was established by the joint efforts of Gandhi and Mohammed Ali.

Many lawyers gave up their practices. Motilal Nehru, C.R. Das, Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad and C. Rajgopalachari renounced their princely incomes and joined the movement. Subhas Chandra Bose resigned from the Indian Civil Service and took up the Principalship of National College in Calcutta."<sup>6</sup>

The Muslims joined the movement in large numbers. The non-cooperation movement was making full progress. Despite the policy of non-violence there were signs of violence in certain parts of the country. The political situation was becoming very critical. So Lord Reading, the new Viceroy, called Gandhi for an interview at Simla in the middle of May, 1921. Four main topics were discussed at this meeting: the Punjab disturbance of 1919, the Khilafat movement, the meaning of Swaraj and Gandhi's policy in the event of an Afghan invasion of India.

On July 31, Gandhi arranged the burning of foreign cloth in Bombay. No less than one half and a half pieces of foreign cloth were consigned to flames. He toured every part of the country. During the first three months of his tour he laid emphasis on the boycott of law courts and of schools and colleges.

The Moplahs revolt took place in Malabar and it lasted several months. The Ali brothers were arrested and sentenced on November 1, 1921 to two years rigorous imprisonment.

The Prince of Wales was to visit Calcutta in the last week of December. Lord Reading wanted to make the Prince's visit to Calcutta a success and encouraged Malviya to negotiate peace with Gandhi. Malviya wired to Gandhi on December 16, 1921 that he proposed to lead a deputation to the Viceroy to urge the calling of a Round Table Conference. If the Viceroy accepted the proposal and released the leaders, Gandhi would call off the boycott on the visit of Prince of Wales and suspend the civil disobedience movement until the Conference was over.<sup>7</sup> Gandhi wired back: "Composition, date of Conference should be previously determined. Release should include prisoners convicted for fatwas including Karachi ones. Subject to these considerations in addition of yours we can in our opinion waive hartal."<sup>8</sup> The Viceroy did not agree and the negotiation failed.

The attitude of the administration stiffened. In December 1921 and January 1922 nearly 30,000 nationalists were imprisoned. Volunteer organisations were made illegal. Meetings and processions were forcibly dispersed, midnight searches of

Congress and Khilafat offices became the order of the day and the treatment of political prisoners became harsher. Motilal Nehru and Jawaharlal were both arrested on the evening of 6 December at Anand Bhawn and were sentenced to six months imprisonment.<sup>9</sup>

Though most of the prominent men and workers were in prison, the leader of the struggle, Mahatma Gandhi was still out. The Government had not touched him so far, for they feared the consequences, the reactions on the Indian Army and the police. Now the political situation changed. On 4 February 1922 he issued a directive for mass civil disobedience movement throughout the country. Almost everywhere the response was non-violent in character. But in Chauri Chaura, an unfortunate incident took place. A crowd passed in front of the police station and the constables opened fire. They went on firing till their ammunitions were exhausted. Then they took shelter inside the police station. The crowd then returned and set fire to the police station. Twenty-two victims were killed including the young son of the sub-Inspector of police. Gandhi was shocked at this incident. He announced that the Indian people were not yet ready to wage a non-violent struggle and summarily called off the non-cooperation movement.<sup>10</sup>

This decision of Gandhi came as a shock to most Congress leaders and workers. Motilal Nehru, who was in jail was much upset by it. The sudden suspension of this movement was resented by almost all the prominent Congress leaders. The younger people were naturally even more agitated. Their mounting hopes tumbled to the ground and this mental reaction was to be expected. "What troubled us even more" wrote Jawaharlal Nehru about these events, "were the reasons for this suspension and the consequences that seemed to flow from them....If (the cessation of the struggle) this was the inevitable consequences of a sporadic act of violence, then surely there was something lacking in the philosophy and technique of a non-violent struggle....Must we train the three hundred and odd millions of Indian in the theory and practice of non-violent action before we could go forward. And, even so, how many

of us could say that under extreme provocation from the police we would be able to remain perfectly peaceful.”<sup>11</sup>

Gandhi wrote a letter to Jawaharlal Nehru on February 19, 1922 : “The movement had unconsciously drifted from the right path. We have come back to our moorings, and we can go straight ahead.”<sup>12</sup> Now Nehru’s feelings were soothed.

Thus Gandhi’s action was not liked by his followers. On the eve of this decision, the Viceroy cabled the following appreciation report to the Secretary of State for India : “The Lower classes in the towns have been seriously affected by the non-cooperation movement....And although (its) influence ... has been much smaller in the rural tracts generally, in certain areas the peasantry have been affected, particularly in parts of the Assam valley, United Province, Bihar and Bengal....It has not been possible to ignore the fact that the non-cooperation movement has to a large extent been engendered and sustained by nationalist aspirations, and so far as Mohammedans are concerned, by religious feelings which have a strong appeal to those also who have not adopted its programme.”<sup>13</sup>

Thus the non-cooperation movement could not attain its objective. The Khilafat movement also collapsed due to the emergence of Kamal Ataturk in Turkey. He declared Turkey a republic and also abolished the institution of Caliphate. This news reached India on March 24, 1924 and gradually the Khilafat movement died out. As Nehru says “The Khilafat movement has its centre elsewhere, and when the core itself was eliminated by Ataturk, the super-structure collapsed, leaving the Muslim masses bewildered and disinclined to any political action.”<sup>14</sup>

**Notes**

1. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru I p. 59.
2. Tendulkar, D.G., Mahatma II, p. I.
3. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru I, p. 60.
4. Tendulkar, D.G. Mahatma II, p. 14.
5. Tendulkar, D.G., Mahatma Gandhi II, p. 29.
6. Tendulkar, D.G., Mahatma, II, p. 33.
7. Nanda, B.R., Mahatma Gandhi, p. 227.
8. Tendulkar, D.G., Mahatma II, p. 71.
9. Brecher, Michael, Nehru, p. 77.
10. Brecher, Michael, Nehru, I, 77
11. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru I, p. 83.
12. Ibid, Nehru I, p. 85.
13. Brecher, Michael, Nehru, p. 79.
14. Nehru, Jawaharlal, *Discovery of India*, p. 416.

## THE SWARAJIST INTERLUDE

Gandhi had been imprisoned in the middle of March 1922. As Brecher says "Shorn of its leader and unity of purpose, the Congress turned in upon itself and indulged in agonizing self-criticism." The establishment of the Swaraj party in 1922 was important for two reasons. First, it was an offshoot of the Congress Movement. Secondly, certain top leaders of the Congress wanted to enter Council. The idea of the Swaraj party was first talked at the Gaya Congress in 1922, which had been presided over by Chitta Ranjan Das. C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru favoured entry into the legislative Councils. C.R. Das's policy was not liked by Rajagopalachari and Dr. Rajendra Prasad. So there was a controversy in the Congress between the "no-changers" and "pro-changers". The crucial question was the proper attitude to the coming general elections under the provisions of the 1919 Government of India Act. The 'Pro-changers' liked to enter Council in order to wreck the Constitution from within. But the 'Pro-changers' could not carry the day with themselves at the Gaya Congress.

Gandhi's programme of non-cooperation was adhered to. So the 'No-changers' triumphed. But this controversy caused a split in the Congress. C.R. Das resigned as Congress President and announced his intention to form the Swaraj party.

Moti Lal Nehru supported C.R. Das's stand. Subsequently many leaders of the country joined the camp of C.R. Das, such as Lala Lajpat Rai, Hakim Ajmal Khan, Mr. N.C. Kelkar, Mr. Rangaswami Iyenger and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. The League leader Maulana Mohammad Ali also accepted Das's view points. In this connection, the following resolutions adopted at the special session of the Indian National Congress, held in Delhi in 1923 over which Maulana Mohammad Ali presided, are interesting and important. The resolution ran in this way ; "While affirming its adherence to the principle of non-cooperation, this Congress declares that such Congressmen as have no religious or other conscientious objection against entering the legislature are at liberty to stand as candidates and to exercise the right of voting at the forthcoming elections, and this Congress suspends all propaganda against entering Councils. The Congress at the same time calls upon all Congressmen to double their efforts to carry out the constructive efforts of their great leader, Mahatma Gandhi, and by united endeavour to achieve Swaraj at the earliest possible moment."<sup>1</sup> So the Swarajists took part in the election. The Swaraj Party emerged the largest and best disciplined group in the Central Legislative Assembly, with forty-five members out of a total of 145 under the leadership of Motilal Nehru. The Swaraj party came out as the strongest party in Bengal and on the majority of seats in the C.P. Council. According to Mr. P.C. Ray, the Swaraj party failed to meet with good luck in Bombay, Madras, Assam and Lahore. In the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, the party met with slight reverses at the polls. C.R. Das became the leader of the Swaraj Party in the Bengal Council.<sup>2</sup>

As C.R. Das was the leader in the Bengal Council, so Lord Lytton, then the Governor of Bengal invited Mr. Das to form the Ministry, but he refused, for his whole purpose in contest-

ing the elections was to make the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms unworkable.

In 1923 the Constitution of the Swaraj Party was drawn up at Pandit Motilal Nehru's residence in Allahabad. It set its goal as the achievement of "Dominion Status".

Mr. C.R. Das's death on June 16, 1925 was a great disaster specially for the Swaraj party. His death was a great tragedy for India as a whole and for Bengal in particular. After his death violence started in Bengal the terrorist creed. After his death, there was nobody left in Bengal politics to take over his mantle.

The Central Legislative Assembly was the scene of Motilal's triumph. He was the leader of the opposition. His entry into the House was always an event. On February 8, 1924, resolution was moved by Diwan Bahadur Rangachariar, a non-swarajist member, demanding a Royal Commission for the revision of the Government of India Act so as to secure for India the status of a Dominion within the British Empire. Motilal moved an amendment proposing that the new Constitution should be framed by a representative Round Table Conference and approved by a newly-elected Legislative Assembly in India before it was embodied in a statute by the British Parliament. Seventy-six members voted in favour of Motilal's amendment and forty-eight against it. This was the first and the most important defeat inflicted by the Swaraj Party on the Government.<sup>3</sup> The Swaraj Party also rejected the first four budget grants. It also threw out Finance Bill. It also rejected the proposals of the Lee Commission on the Imperial Services.

But Pandit Motilal died on 6 February, 1931. His death proved another great disaster for the country as well as for the Swaraj Party. Motilal had the strength of character, intelligence, political experience and ability. He got on well with the British and the Muslims. Before his death he had prepared the 'Nehru Report.'

Thus the Swaraj Party decayed after the death of C.R. Das

and Motilal. The Swarajist believed that India would achieve freedom only by two methods : Violent or Constitutional. Indian Independence of 1947 was the result of various factors; constitutional and violence, though constitutionalism played major role.

### Notes

1. Sinha, Sasadhar, Indian Independence, p. 127.
2. Ibid. p. 127.
3. Nanda, B.K., The Nehrus, p. 228.

## EIGHT

### THE SIMON COMMISSION

Just before the 1927 Madras Congress Session, appointment of the all-white Statutory Commission was announced simultaneously by the British Prime Minister in Parliament and the Viceroy in India on November 8, 1927. It was an all-white Commission. The Chairman of the Commission was Sir John Simon, an eminent lawyer and a liberal politician; of its other six members, the only one now remembered is Clement Attlee, the future Prime Minister of England. The personnel of the Statutory Commission was solely from the British Community without any Indian representative, although it was the future constitution of India which was to be the subject of inquiry, discussion and decision. This was obviously a wrong precedent which was bound to give offence to the patriotic sentiments of the people of India. In every post, in every Commission dealing with Indian affairs, Indians were given proportional representation. In the Lee Commission and the Skeen Commission, Indians were duly represented.

According to C.Y. Chintamani, 'The stamp of inferiority was fixed on the brow of Indians merely because they were not God's own Englishmen.'

The duty of the Commission was to investigate the working of the Government of India Act, 1919; to inquire into 'desirability of introducing responsible Government', to the extent which Constitutional reform might be introduced.<sup>1</sup>

The appointment of this Commission deeply annoyed Indian opinion. 'Never since the Ilbert Bill' writes the historian of Irwin's Viceroyalty, 'had racial feelings been stirred so deeply'.<sup>2</sup>

It raised a veritable political storm and also evoked universal protest, criticism and dissatisfaction in the whole country. The leaders of the extreme left and the extreme right of Indian politics who regarded the exclusion of Indians from the Commission as a direct insult to the intelligence of India, joined hands in denouncing its constitution and procedure and advocating its boycott. Moderates and Extremists, Swarajists and No-changers, Congressmen and some of the loyalists—all stood on the same platform. Meetings of protest were held in almost all the towns and cities throughout the country in order to record their emphatic protest against the Commission. However, with the exception of the European Associations, the Anglo-Indian press and a small section of the Mohammedans, headed by Mohammed Shafi, in the Punjab, all shades of opinion merged in a common unanimity and the whole of India stood almost as one against the personnel and the proposed methods and procedures of the Commission. The Indian National Congress decided to boycott the Commission 'at every stage and in every form'. Sir John Simon reached India in February, 1928.

Lala Lajpat Rai introduced the famous resolution in the Central Legislative Assembly calling for a boycott of the Simon Commission. Pandit Motilal supported this resolution. The Congress, the National Liberal Federation, the Jinnah wing of the Muslim League, all spoke with one voice. Malaviya, Lajpat Rai, Jayakar and Motilal presented an unbroken front

to the Assembly. The boycott resolution passed through the Legislative Assembly by sixty-eight votes to sixty-two.

This movement also spread in Bengal. This movement has some special characteristics. In the first place, since the calling off the Non-cooperation movement owing to Chauri Chaura in 1922 it was a direct challenge against the British on all India level. In Bengal anti-Simon agitation did not present any new characteristics. It emphasised the same political method of organising the middle class town people which was followed earlier. This agitation was concentrated in towns and confined to boycott and procession and its main participants were students and professional intellectuals. The peasants and workers of Bengal were still disorganised and most of them were completely unknown about this agitation. Sir John Simon and his colleagues were subjected to social as well as political boycott. On October 30th, the Simon Commission reached Lahore. The crowd had been demonstrating in front of the railway station. Lajpat Rai, the most popular leader of the province was assaulted and beaten on his chest with a baton by a young English Police Officer. Lala Lajpat Rai had not been indulging in any methods of violence. The physical injury to Lajpat Rai had been serious enough and he died on November 17th, 1928.<sup>3</sup>

The death of Lala Lajpat Rai caused anger and indignation throughout the country. This death increased the vigour of the demonstrations against the Simon Commission in places which it subsequently visited. The Simon Commission then went to Lucknow. Processions had been prohibited by the authority. On the 29th November Jawaharlal led a column of a satyagrahis towards the Central meeting-ground. There were sixteen volunteers in the group. Suddenly the mounted policemen started belabouring volunteers. Jawaharlal also got two blows on the back. As Jawaharlal says: 'I felt stunned, and my body quivered all over, but to my surprise satisfaction, I found that I was still standing.'<sup>4</sup> On November 30th another demonstration was organised against the Simon Commission. Several thousands had joined the processions. The procession was approaching the Lucknow railway station. The police

stopped the procession. Jawaharlal was again beaten with Lathees and long batons both by the mounted and the foot police. Jawaharlal was lucky to escape the kind of permanent disability which was sustained during those police assaults by Govind Ballav Pant. Mahatma Gandhi wrote a letter to Jawaharlal after the brutal lathee charges : "My love to you. It was all done bravely. You have braver things to do. May God spare you for many a long years to come, and make you His chosen instrument for freeing India from the yoke."<sup>3</sup>

In this way the boycott of the Simon Commission took place everywhere. Anti-Simon agitation was bound to be a failure rooted in its programme as it was not bound up by any long standing programme to fight the British government. In Bengal an attempt was made to link up this issue with the greater issues of masses to initiate a popular movement against the British Government. But this failed to gain much ground. In spite of such protests the Simon Commission completed its work and before the First Round Table Conference met the Simon report appeared on 5th September, 1929.

#### Major Recommendations of the Simon Commission

The Commission mentioned that Dyarchy in the provinces failed and should be set aside. Full responsible Government should be given to the provinces with safeguards vested in the special powers of the Governor. A Provincial Cabinet was to act jointly in the matter of administration and policy. There should be unity of the provincial cabinet which should also be elastic in the number of members. It was not absolutely necessary that Ministers of a provincial cabinet should all be elected the members of Legislature. The Governor might include an official element if necessary. The franchise was to be trebled and should include a large number of women voters and consequently the number of seats also should be increased.

Communal representation though theoretically objectionable, was maintained. But several changes were proposed, as for example (1) The "primary groups" of Mohammedans

might make a list of legible candidates, from which finally the members of Legislatures should be elected by a system of joint electorates; (2) The Simon Commission rejected the idea of a proportional representation, because the ordinary electorates with reservations of seats might be tried but Muslim opinion was opposed to this method. Hence the, method of separate representation was to continue, until the community agreed to revise it.

The depressed classes were to have reservation of seats at the expense of general or non-Mohammedan seats. The official block was to disappear. Burma was to be separated from India, Orissa and Sindh should be separate provinces and there should be a redistribution of provincial boundaries.

An important recommendation of the Simon Commission was the provision for amendment of the Constitutional structure of the Provinces. Under the 1919 scheme which was very rigid, no power had been vested in a provincial Government to propose and carry through amendments which experience might prove necessary. The recommendation of the Simon Commission was that if Provincial autonomy was to be a reality, a Provincial Government should have also the power of amending its own structure. Most of the Legislature under the (British) Commonwealth enjoy this power. They are not only legislative bodies but also constituent bodies. Hence Provincial Government should have the power of making statutory rules, altering, if necessary such things, as communal representation, the method of election, the revision of franchise, the redistribution of constituencies and the alteration of the size of the Council. Of these the most important was the provision for a revision of a communal franchise. Separate electorate should not be allowed to check the tide. If a change of feeling occurred in a Province, it should have some channel of expression and a handful of members in the legislature should not be allowed to block new proposals. It was proposed therefore by the Simon Commission that after a lapse of ten years, it should be within the power of a Provincial Legislature to carry a constitutional resolution providing for the necessary

change by a 2/3 majority of the members of the community affected by such a resolution.

But no machinery was suggested by which the Governor of a province on whom rested the entire responsibility might assent the bills of the community of a province as a whole.

At the Centre however no responsibility was emphasized at the beginning. The Simon Commission was all along in favour of a strong nerve Centre. The Centre should have complete responsibility. The Commission made certain tentative proposals and recommended a federation to be thrashed out at a Round Table Conference, where the provinces would express their view with regard to Federation. But this was in the opinion of Simon Commission a remote possibility. In the mean time there would be no advance at the centre. While Dyarchy was to be abolished in the provinces, it should not be introduced in the Centre. Unity in the Central Executive must be preserved at all costs. At the same time it was not the intention of the Commission to reduce the power of the Central legislature over the Central Executive. Responsible Government at the Centre might be ruled out for the present, but it was to come in some remote future. Hence preparation for the future should begin from the present. If and when All-India Federation was to be set up, responsible Government might also be established at the Centre. It was with this end in view that the Simon Commission recommended a Federal Legislature to start with so that the Federal Legislature representing the autonomous provinces might prepare the ground for future Federation. Till that Federation was established, the Government at the Centre would remain irresponsible. Federalism was the distant goal but in the mean time nothing should be done to impair unity and strength at the Centre. "However great the independent powers of Provinces may be, it is essential that there should be a nerve centre for the whole". Eight categories were defined, such as administration of Central subjects.. In the Provinces, raising of loans, All-India Services, Imperial interests implementing international obligations etc., but the proposal was tentative and elastic. Any change which

might be thought afterwards might be effected by a simple resolution of the two Houses of Parliament without any amendment of the Government of India Act.

Central control, however, as envisaged by the Simon Commission was best illustrated by the financial settlement.

### Notes

1. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru I, p. 283.
2. Nanda, B.R. The Nehrus, pp. 280-284.
3. Nanda, B.R., The Nehrus, p. 285.
4. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru, I, p. 150.
5. Ibid., p. 153.

## EARLY TRADITIONAL FINANCIAL SYSTEM

The self-sufficient isolated and impoverished village as the unit of financial administration, had lack of communication, vagaries of nature, absence of demand for imports from abroad for essential or luxury. These features had combined to perpetuate the poverty of the Indian village.

The financial system under the Mughal was a perfect centralisation. It was this centralised financial system which was taken over by the East India Company. This system worked during the early years of the British rule but the incessant wars and the constant administrative expansion increased expenditure of the Company. Hence some solutions were expected from the Permanent Settlement of 1793. But even that was no solution at all and again the disproportion between income and expenditure grew and this remained an important aspects of the rule of the Company. Again and again the Company asked for loans from Home Government. The Home Government offered loans again and again on condition of stricter Parliamentary

supervision and in the end the Company was superseded by the Crown in the administration of India.

Besides centralisation, rural poverty and administrative expenditure were main reasons for failure of the authority in India. Here the local and district boards had the power to levy local rates on a generous scale. But for every important levies the local boards had to obtain the sanction of the Central government and this was in sharp contrast to conditions prevailing in England where local authorities were statutorily empowered to levy local rates on a liberal scale for local means.

The next stage in the development of financial system began from 1858. The Centralised financial system was taken over by the Crown from the Company. The Government at the Centre retained full supervision over provincial finance. Mr. James Wilson, Financial Secretary to the British Treasury became India's first Finance member (Minister) and he forthwith introduced a series of important reforms to restore financial equilibrium. He drastically reduced the expenditure on civil administration, reformed the custom system, created a state paper currency and for the first time introduced the income tax. Central financial control still remained the basis of the system and Provincial Government had to depend entirely on the Central Goverment for the most trivial expenditure and did not share the growing proceeds of the sources of the Central revenue. In 1871 in Lord Mayo's time the next big change began, a change towards decentralisation of finance. Certain sources of general revenue were provincialised for the first time. This was continued in Lord Lytton's time, when important heads of revenue such as stamp duty, Alcholic excises and Income tax collected in the provinces were provincialised. From 1882 began a change in the system. Provincial financial settlements were made on the basis of divided heads of revenue, a system which continued till the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms and the appointment of Meston Committee. Certain sources of revenue were declared to be provincial no doubt, but in respect of other sources a workable compromise was reached varying from province to province on the basis of

which the sources were shared by Central and the Provincial Government. Under this arrangement while décentralisation still remained the general rule, the heads of revenue in many cases were divided between Centre and provinces and the Central Government retained the practice of giving what came to be called doles to the provinces as the social services of the provinces began to expand.

Next came the Montagu-Chelmsford scheme and the Meston Settlement. This scheme was based upon decentralisation or devolution and it was clearly laid down that if Provincial Autonomy was to work at all, it should be based upon the real fiscal autonomy. The previous system of divided heads of revenue was condemned, because it still meant the Central financial control. The scheme actually suggested was that in financial matters the centre should have a revenue sufficient but only sufficient to cover the expense of Imperial and Central services. The rest of the Indian revenue should go to the provinces. If the Central Government found its revenue inadequate, it should have contributions from the provinces, which were expected to receive large and profitable sources of revenue. For this purposes no divided heads of revenue but separate sources of revenue should be fixed for the Centre as well as for the provinces. This general scheme was elaborated by the Meston Committee and the Meston report came out in 1920. It formed the financial basis of the Montagu-Chelmsford reform. The provincial contribution as laid down by the Meston Scheme came in for a good deal of criticism. The contribution were unequal and the industrial provinces like Bombay and Bengal suffered most, while agricultural provinces like U.P. were let off with mild contribution and Bihar and Orissa made no contribution at all. Moreover with the launching of the reform, provincial expenses increased enormously and so did the Central expenses. The War 1914-18, the rising cost of living, the increased scales of pay, the new expenses for the nation building department, all these made the Meston Settlement out of date. It was moreover pointed out that the scheme of responsible government in the provinces did not work properly mainly because of finances.

The basic assumption that there might be a deficit Central budget and that the provinces would have the surplus, which should go to the Centre, was wrong. Experience proved rather the contrary. Where the Central sources of revenue were expanding and the Central expenditure remained stationary, the provincial revenue did not increase. Over and above under the Meston Settlement the provinces had to contribute to the Centre. This system did not work therefore and the provincial contribution afterwards lapsed (1927-28).

Besides the Meston Award which was a characteristic feature of the Montagu-Chelmsford reform, another noticeable thing was the contradiction between the principle of financial control by Government of India, the Secretary of State in Council and the Parliament. Before 1858 Indian Finance was controlled by the President of the Board of Control, who enjoyed Cabinet rank and was assisted by a Council. After 1858 the Secretary of State was given statutory authority to supervise direct and control "all matters relating to the revenues of India." This control of the Secretary of State in Council was absolute and even Parliament could not go against expressed wish of the majority in Council without amending the Act of 1858. This system went on till the Montagu-Chelmsford reform. With the new reform and with the grant of responsibility in the provinces, a relaxation of control over provincial finance by the Secretary of State in Council and Parliament became evident. Annual budget became a regular feature in the provinces and in matters of finance the Centre and provincial executive came to be associated with the standing finance committee of the legislature. The advice of these Standing Finance Committees however being only advisory and were not binding on the Executives. This meant financial devolution to a certain extent but the financial power of the Secretary of State in Council still remained unimpaired. Provincial budget had still to be approved of by the Central Government or the Secretary of State and the provincial borrowings were still closely regulated. Central finance likewise remained under the supervision of the Home Government and the Secretary of State in Council

appointed an Auditor-General, whose function was to see that the line of demarcation between the power of Secretary of State and the authorities in India in matters of finance was maintained.

The Simon Commission in financial matters obtained the assistance of Mr. Layton. Layton found that the Central sources of revenue were rapidly expanding while the Central expenses remained stationary. He also realised that the provincial sources were rigid and not capable of expansion, whereas it was the provinces and not the Centre which stood in need of rapidly expanding revenue. The Central Government was already enjoying a surplus and this surplus even if distributed among the provinces would not be adequate for the provinces, where the social services such as education and sanitation required more and more outlay. Hence Layton's recommendation was that the Central Government should devise means by which the provinces might be in a large measure fed from the Centre. Not financial devolution or decentralisation but the greater Centre control came to be advocated by Mr. Layton. There would still be a schedule of provincial sources of revenue so that they might be augmented. In some cases divided heads of revenue were to reappear but the most important scheme of Layton was for a provincial fund and elaborate mechanism was set up and inter-provincial financial committee was established consisting of the Finance Minister of the provinces.

They were to be summoned by the Finance Member of the Government of India and were to recommend the levy of the new taxes and the collection of these taxes by the Central Government. The recommendation was then to be placed before the Federal Assembly, that is, the lower house of the Council of State. If carried by the lower house, the revenue was to be collected by the Central Government and was to form a provincial fund which should never be touched by the Central Government for its own purposes. Contribution from this provincial fund to the provinces should not be at the discretion of the Central Government. On the contrary distribution

among the provinces would be on pre-meditated plan, that is, strictly on the basis of population.

This centralisation was no doubt checked by the Montagu-Chelmsford report based as these were on the theory of devolution or gradual control or gradual relaxation of control but even after 1919 considerable powers were still vested in the Governor-General in Council and above everything was the Secretary of State for India and his Council. In the field of finance specially and by the Meston settlement, this fact was amply proved. Hence one of the main recommendations of the Simon Commission was maintenance of this Indian unity. "However great the independent power of the province may be, it is essential that there should be a nerve centre for the whole."



# Part II

## ONE

### THE MOTILAL NEHRU REPORT

The boycott of the Simon Commission was a major event in India during 1928. This year was followed by a second significant development : appointment of an All-Parties Conference. An All-Parties Conference was the result of Birkenhead's challenge. Birkenhead threw challenge in this way : 'I have twice in three years, during which I have been Secretary of State, invited our critics in India to put forward their own suggestions for a Constitution to indicate to us the form, in which in their judgement any reform of Constitution may take place. That offer is still open.<sup>1</sup>

The Congress leaders took up this challenge and it was discussed by the Madras Congress in 1927. The Madras Congress had directed the Congress Working Committee to draft a 'Swaraj' Constitution in consultation with other parties. So in February, 1928, an All-Parties Conference met in Delhi. Dr. Ansari, the Congress President, was the president of the Conference. This Conference liked 'full responsible Government.' The Conference met in May in Bombay. It appointed

a Sub-Committee to decide the principles of an Indian Constitution. The sub-committee was presided over by Motilal and included Sir Ali Imam and Shuab Qureshi (Muslims) Aney and Jayakar (Hindu Mahasabha), Mangal Singh (the Sikh League), Tej Bahadur Sapru (Liberals), N.M. Joshi (Labour) and G.R. Pradhan (Non-Brahmins). Jawaharlal, who was the General Secretary of the All India Congress Committee, also acted as the Secretary of this Committee. It was known as the Nehru Committee. This Committee had to draw up some kind of a Constitution for India.

The Nehru Committee had to find a solution of the Muslim minority. The problem was how to protect Muslim interests. By 1928 Muslim wanted 'Communal provinces' as well as 'Communal electorates'. The Committee decided for a declaration of Fundamental Rights and for a reservation of seats in legislatures under joint electorates. The Committee framed its Constitution on the basis of Dominion Status 'not as a remote stage of our evolution, but as the next immediate step'. The Motilal Nehru Committee of 1928 stated in its report : "We have...made our recommendations on the basis (1) That we are agreed that nothing short of Dominion Status will satisfy India and (2) that the form of Government to be established in India will be the same and not lower than that of the other self-governing dominions."

The Nehru report recommended a unitary form of government and repudiated the principles of separate electorates and weightage for the Muslims in the provinces in which they were in a minority. Jinnah sought accommodation with the Congress on the heads of a constitution and attended for a time the All-parties Conference. Another group of the Muslims under the Aga Khan's Chairmanship tried to formulate their answer to the Nehru report. He favoured the recasting of provincial boundaries on racial, cultural and linguistic lines and an eventual federation of free states. Jinnah brought his fourteen points to secure modifications of the Nehru Committee's recommendations on the lines of the Delhi proposals. But Jinnah did not succeed in his aim. His fourteen points were

rejected one by one. He was also 'taunted with having no right to represent the Muslims. It broke his heart and hurt his pride and he gave up all hope of Hindu-Muslim unity which was his life's mission. These proposals were not only rejected, but his representative capacity as a spokesman of the Muslims was questioned. It is reported that Jinnah took this to heart. 'He had tears in his eyes as he said, 'Jamshed (his Parsee friend), this is the parting of the ways.'

After the death of C.R. Das the Congress itself had split into two, and its radical wing was led by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and by Mr. Subhas Chandra Bose. Both of whom acted as General Secretaries of the Congress in 1927. The Constitution had been accepted 'in principle' by the All-Parties Conference in Lucknow at the end of August. The communal problem was a source of trouble in the country and the Nehru Committee gave too much thought on this issue. Jinnah, the Aga Khan and the Ali Brothers denounced the Nehru Report. These Muslim leaders wanted separate electorates, reservation of one-third of the seats in the Central Legislature, and the vesting of residuary powers in the provinces.<sup>3</sup> The year 1928 was drawing to a close and the Nehru Report had to face an opposition from the radical group. Jawaharlal did not like the Dominion Status. Rather he liked complete independence.

After his return to India from Europe in December, 1927, Jawaharlal began to play as increasingly important role in Congress. Nehru's political thought had undergone a transformation as the result of his sojourn in the West. He believed that political freedom was too narrow an object for the Indian nationalist movement. Hence he wanted complete independence for India. Motilal was not prepared to accept a compromise but Jawaharlal was ready for it. Now Jawaharlal established an 'Independence for India League', in November 1928, of which Jawaharlal and Subhas Bose were Secretaries. Srinivas Iyenger, the Deputy Leader of the Swaraj Party was the President of this league. This league was like a pressure group within the Congress. Membership was confined to

Congressmen and its avowed goal was to influence the Congress programme.

The controversy over Dominion Status versus complete independence had caused a split within the party. Father and son, proceeded from different angles. Motilal said : 'Dominion Status was a very considerable measure of freedom bordering on independence. And independence did not mean 'walking out of the world....Indeed the more independent you are, the more necessary it will be to establish relations all round.'<sup>4</sup> Against his, Jawaharlal Nehru said : 'success often comes to those who dare and act....we play for high stakes and if we seek to achieve great things it can only be through great dangers.'

At last the Calcutta Congress drew near. Motilal was to preside over this session. The All-India Congress Committee discussed all issues confronting the Congress. The Committee adhered to the Madras Resolution on complete independence and also accepted the recommendations of the 'Nehru Report'.<sup>5</sup> It was a compromise but Motilal did not like this approach. The session started during Christmas week of 1928. In the 'Subjects Committee' there were long and heated debate. Mahatma Gandhi suggested a via media on December 27th. Gandhi paid lip service to the goal of complete independence, but he also praised the 'Nehru Report'. He moved a resolution that the Congress should adopt the whole of Nehru Report, but if it were not accepted by the Government within two years, the Congress should opt for complete independence and fight for it. Nehru opposed this and he condemned the acceptance of Dominion Status as an extremely wrong and foolish act and advocated civil disobedience if complete independence were not granted within a year. At last that evening there were further discussions and on 28 December. Gandhi withdrew his original resolution and proposed another giving London only one year to accept the Dominion Status formula. This resolution was carried in the Subjects Committee by 118 votes to 45. Jawaharlal was absent and Subhas Chandra did not take part in the debate.

The resolution came up before the plenary session three days later. Subhas Chandra opposed the resolution and he was joined by Nehru. Gandhi was hurt and he said : 'when we have no sense of honour, when we cannot allow our words to remain unaltered for twenty-four hours, do not talk of independence.' But Gandhi's appeal proved ineffective'.

Bose's amendment was rejected by 1350 to 973.

The Nehru Report was an attempt to bring India nearer to Britain. But the British Parliament did not take this Report seriously. 'The British Parliament could never accept a position' said the Viceroy on January 28, 1929, 'which would reduce it to being a mere registrar of the decisions of other persons.' The Governor-General in Council took this view that we could take no such steps when the Indian Statutory Commission was conducting its inquiry. So this Report did not receive serious consideration from the Government.

### 1929 and the Lahore Congress

The Calcutta compromise prepared the stage for a year of uneasy quiet. Early in 1929 Gandhi was thinking to leave India in April for a long trip abroad. He was thinking over this seriously in January 1929. But Motilal advised a postponement. He wrote a letter to Gandhi on January 14, 1929 that this year would be an eventful one and perhaps Hailey, Governor of the U.P. would arrest Jawaharlal after March. Motilal's apprehensions were not groundless. The Government of India suggested to the Bombay Government that proceedings might be started against Jawaharlal for making a speech on December 12, 1928, at the Bombay Presidency youth Conference. But the Bombay Government did not think it proper to do so.

In 1929 Gandhi was arrested in Calcutta on charge of lighting a bonfire of foreign cloth at the Shradhanand Park on March 4. Gandhi was fined rupees one, which was paid by somebody, without Gandhi's knowledge.

The Government were interested in the Public Safety Bill and so the Government introduced it in the Central Assembly.

V.J. Patel was the President of the House. The Speaker proposed on April 2 that the Public Safety Bill should be postponed till the Meerut trial had concluded. The Government did not like this plea. On April 8, the Trades Disputes Bill was passed by the Assembly. Then the Speaker rose to give his ruling on the Public Safety Bill. At that very moment two bombs were thrown from the visitors' gallery near the seat of Sir George Schuster, the Finance Member. Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt had thrown bombs. They were at ones arrested for crime. Bhagat Singh was a nephew of Ajit Singh and leader of the Youth Movement in the Punjab. The bombs were intended "to make noise and create a stir, not to injure."

After the bomb incident the president ruled the Public Safety Bill out of order. But the Governor-General did not like this ruling.

Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt were sentenced to transportation for life at the historic trial held in Delhi on June 12, 1929. In the course of a statement they said : 'we dropped the bombs on the floor of the Assembly to register our protest on behalf of those who had no other means left to give expression to their heart-rending agony. Our sole purpose was to make the deaf hear and to give the heedless a timely warning.'<sup>28</sup>

The Government were panicky. A strike of textile workers took place in Bombay and Jamshedpur. The Government followed the policy of repression. In Bengal, U.P. and the Punjab there was the terrorist activity. The police implicated Bhagat Singh, and Batukeshwar Dutt in the Lahore Conspiracy case. Their trial and trial of certain other persons started. These prisoners did not receive proper treatment in court and in prison. So the prisoners took to hunger-strike. For over two months Bhagat Singh, B.K. Dutt and Jatin Das were on hunger strike over the treatment of the political prisoners. Jatin Das died on September 13, 1928. Bhagat Singh was also convicted in the Lahore Conspiracy Case and he was executed on March 23, 1931 along with Raj Guru and Sukh Dev.

### Purna Swaraj-1929-Lahore Congress

In the Summer of 1927 there had been discussions among Congress leaders concerning the choice of a President for the Madras session. The name of Jawaharlal Nehru was mentioned. Mahatma Gandhi sounded Nehru, who was in Switzerland. Gandhi sent a letter to Jawaharlal. He neither felt nor displayed much enthusiasm for the proposal. Both Motilal and Gandhi finally agreed that the time had not yet come for him to take command. His turn came in 1929. Mahatma Gandhi recommended Jawaharlal's name for Congress President for the Lahore session. Motilal was also pressing his son's claim for the Congress Presidency. But Jawaharlal did not like this idea. He wrote a letter to Gandhi on July, 'I am very nervous about the matter and do not like the idea at all.' On August 21, he telegraphed to Gandhi : 'Beg of you not to press my name for Presidentship.' A few days later he spoke at length his limitations for the high office of the Congress President 'I represent nobody but myself. I have not the politician's flair for forming groups and parties. ...If I have the misfortune to be President, you will see that the very people who put me there... will be prepared to cast me to the wolves.'

A meeting of the A.I.C.C. was held at Lucknow in September to decide finally. Mahatma Gandhi was nominated by ten Provincial Congress Committees, while Vallabhbhai Patel and Jawaharlal were backed by five and three committees respectively. Gandhi had withdrawn earlier. Patel also withdrew from the race. Gandhi pressed Jawaharlal's name for the Presidentship which was accepted.

Gandhi told to the Press on July 6, 1929; "The battle of the future has to be fought by younger men and women ... responsibility will mellow and sober the Youth and prepare them for the burden they must discharge."<sup>10</sup> He spoke about Jawaharlal's qualities in this way : "In bravery he (Jawaharlal) is not be surpassed. Who can excel him in...love of the country ? 'He is rash and impetuous' say some. This quality is an additional qualification at the present moment... .He is pure ..as crystal, he is truthful beyond suspicion."<sup>11</sup>

The Lahore Congress assembled on December 29, 1929 on the banks of the Ravi River. The President-elect got a rousing reception at the station and was taken out in a grand procession. The father and the mother watched the presidential procession....visibly moved, their eyes laved with tears. The father was in a happy frame of mind. He predicted that his son would accomplish what he could not do. But he was not destined to see this proud day. In little more than a year he was dead.

The Lahore Congress decided that there could be no purpose for Congress leaders attending the forthcoming 1930 Round Table Conference in London.

It was resolved that "Purna Swaraj" (Complete independence) must be attained by legitimate and peaceful means. Non-payment of taxes was deemed fit. The legislators were to be boycotted.

Nehru was silent throughout this momentous debate. But he did speak his mind in a moving Presidential address : 'I must frankly confess that I am a Socialist and a republican and am no believer in kings and princes or in the order which produces the modern kings of industry, who have greater power over the lives and fortunes of men than even the kings of old, and whose methods are as predatory as those of old feudal aristocracy.'<sup>12</sup> It was decided to win Swaraj at all costs and at the earliest possible moment. Pandit Nehru emphasised the need for rigid discipline and firm determination to make the coming struggle successful. He would welcome purging of the Congress of such men as were content with mere reform of the present order. The history of the world, he declared, taught that it was not a crowd of sheep that won freedom, but bands of disciplined, determined men.

The Lahore Congress was over. The war was soon to begin.

### Notes

1. Nanda, B.R., *The Nehrus*, p. 287.
2. Norman, Dorothy, *Nehru II*, p. 169.
3. *The Proceeding of the All-Parties convention*, p. 95.
4. Nanda, B.R., *The Nehrus*, p. 302.
5. Brecher, Michael, *Nehru*, p. 132.
6. Brecher, Michael, *Nehru*, p. 133.
7. Tendulkar, D.G., *Mahatma II*, p. 357.
8. Tendulkar, D.G., *Mahatma II*, p. 358.
9. Norman, Dorothy, *Nehru I*, p. 190.
10. Norman, Dorothy, *Nehru*, p. 190.
11. Tendulkar, D.G., *Mahatma II*, p. 372.
12. Norman, Dorothy, *Nehru I*, p. 204.

## **INDEPENDENCE DAY, JANUARY 26, 1930 : APPROACH OF CIVIL DIS-OBEDIENCE**

A struggle between the Congress and the Government was now inevitable. The first step Gandhi took was to call for the celebration of 'Independence Day' on January 26, 1920. On that day, in the towns and villages of India thousands took a pledge to Swaraj after hearing Congress-spokesmen on the evils of the British rule. People took a pledge that 'it was a crime against man and God to submit to British Rule.'<sup>1</sup> We will therefore prepare ourselves by withdrawing, so far as we can, all voluntary association from the British Government and will prepare for civil disobedience, including non-payment of taxes....we therefore hereby solemnly resolve to carry out the Congress instructions issued from time to time for the purpose of establishing 'Purna Swaraj.'<sup>2</sup> From 1930 onwards, the country observed January 26 as 'Independence Day'. The new Constitution of India was inaugurated on January 26, 1950 as a mark of tribute to this day.

Gandhi felt that the country was ripe for mass movement. He suggested the inauguration of this movement with the breach of the Salt laws. The salt tax hit the poorest in the land. Among the various reforms Gandhi demanded were such measures as reduction of the land tax, the military budget, the salaries of high officials; an amnesty for political prisoners and termination of colonial rule in India. He declared that if his requests were not met, Civil Disobedience would be initiated by way of pilgrimage, in defiance of the salt tax.

Lord Irwin took no notice. Further he expressed his regret at Gandhi's attitude.

Gandhi decided to march from his Sabarmati Ashram near Ahmedabad to the Arabian sea, a distance of 241 miles and there openly violate the law by making salt from the sea. Early in the morning at 6.30 A.M. on March 12, 1930 Gandhi and his seventy-eight disciples started for the sea. The seventy-nine satyagrahis included scholars, newspaper editors, untouchables and weavers. Thus the Dandi Salt March was undertaken. During his 241-mile march he halted at a number of villages and towns, addressed the audience and advised them to prepare themselves for the civil disobedience movement. The British Government did not wish to arrest Gandhi during the march. It knew that a hasty step of this kind might lead to serious repercussions among the people of India. Gandhi reached the sea on the morning of April 5.

He proceeded to break the law by preparing salt from sea water. He also wrote a letter to the Viceroy of his intention to demand possession of the salt works at Dharsana. So he was arrested, under Regulation III<sup>3</sup> of 1827 on May 5. He was kept in Yeravada prison near Poona.

The breach of Salt law by Gandhi at Dandi was the signal for the inauguration of the civil dis-obedience movement in all the provinces of India. Although Gandhi and many other leading Congress leaders were arrested, the tempo of the first phase of the movement continued till the Gandhi-Irwin pact was concluded in March 1931.

The authorities had been crying to curb the movement. Vallabhbhai Patel had already been arrested on March 7th. Jawaharlal was arrested on April 14 for violating the salt law, while on his way to attend a Conference. He was tried and was sentenced to six months' confinement in Central Prison, Naini, Jawaharlal nominated Motilal to be "Acting President" of Congress in his absence.

The year 1930 was full of dramatic situations and inspiring happenings. The Government responded with mass arrests, estimated at 60,000 (official) to 90,000 (Congress). Many prominent persons were convicted for the breach of the Salt Laws as Rajagopalachari, Madan Mohan Malaviya, J.M. Sen Gupta, B.C. Kher, K.M. Munshi, Devadas Gandhi, Mahadev Desai and Vithalbhai Patel. Women from aristocratic and middle-class families picketed liquor and foreign cloth shops.

On the whole campaign of 1930 was non-violent in character, though sometimes there were clashes between demonstrators and the police.

#### Notes

1. Nanda, B.R., Mahatma Gandhi, p. 290.
2. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru I, p. 148.
3. Nanda, B.R., Mahatma, p. 297.

## THREE

### 1930 ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE

The Civil Disobedience Movement was in full swing. At the same time the report of the Simon Commission was published during the summer of 1930. Its recommendations did not evoke the enthusiasm of even conservative people in India.

Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal and other leaders were in jail when the first Round Table Conference met in London on November 12, 1930, to discuss possible changes in the manner in which India was to be governed in the future. The Congress was not represented on it. At first no progress was made on the problem of communal representation, at the Hindu Mahasabha and Muslim parties took different stand on it. It appeared that the Conference would fail. However at the beginning of January 1931 Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru brought a proposal to break the deadlock. According to this proposal, there would be an All-India Federation at the Centre and also full fledged responsible Government would be introduced there. This plan was even accepted by the Indian princes and they indicated a desire to join such a federation.<sup>1</sup>

The issue of communal representation could not be solved, but enough progress was made in that direction to adjourn the proceedings, in the hope that the Congress would co-operate in the plan. Thus on 19 January 1931, Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald declared that the British Government was prepared to recognise the principle of Executive responsibility to the legislature, except for the safeguards notably Defence, External Affairs, the maintenance of tranquility in the realm, and the guarantee of financial stability. On January 25, 1931, Gandhi and nineteen members of the working Committee were released from jail. Kamala Nehru was also released.

The year 1931 was memorable in another respect Motilal Nehru died on February, 6. The death of Motilal Nehru coincided with an important decision of the Congress the abandonment of Civil Disobedience.

After their release, Gandhi and the Congress Working Committee were deliberating future policy in Allahabad. While they were discussing, Gandhi received a wire from Savru, Jayakar and Sastri. They had returned from London after attending the first Round Table Conference. They requested Gandhi not to take any decision until the results of the London talks could be conveyed personally. They met Gandhi and Gandhi agreed to meet Viceroy. An interview was granted by Lord Irwin to Gandhi.

The Gandhi-Irwin parleys began on the afternoon of February 17, 1931 at the Viceregal House. Churchill did not like this talk. He issued his statement which wounded the feelings of Indian people. The statement ran in this way : "The nauseating and humiliating spectacle of this one time Inner Temple Lawyer, now seditious fakir, striding halfnaked on the steps of the Viceroy's palace, there to negotiate and to parley on equal terms with the representative of the King-Emperor."<sup>2</sup> They met six times and on the morning of March, 5 (according to Nanda March 4), an agreement was reached to be known as the Delhi Pact.

According to the Pact, Civil Disobedience was to be called off, prisoners released, and salt manufacture permitted on the

coast. Congress would attend the next Round Table Conference in London, but neither Independence nor Dominion Status was assured.

The Delhi Pact was ratified at the Karachi Congress session of March 1931. This ratification initially dismayed Nehru. Nehru spoke in this way : "We should not have agreed to suspension of civil disobedience." It will demoralize our Movement. Clause 2 (two) especially disturbed him.<sup>3</sup> Finally, however, he consented to move the resolution accepting the pact. The President of the Karachi Congress session was Sardar Patel.

Brecher has commented that the 'Delhi Pact' provided a respite to both parties in the long-drawn-out struggle of the early thirties. A truce had been proclaimed, but tension and distrust remained. Soon after the Delhi pact, Lord Irwin left India, and Lord Willingdon came in his place as Viceroy. This view grew up that the new Viceroy was a hard and stern person and not so amenable to compromise as Irwin.<sup>4</sup>

#### Notes

1. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru I, p. 238.
2. Quoted in Brecher's Nehru, p. 171.
3. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru I, p. 241.
4. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru II, p. 246.

## FOUR

### **SECOND ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE (SEPT. 1931—DEC. 1931)**

Gandhi was the sole representative of the Congress at the Round Table Conference. He reached London on September 12, 1931. The Delhi Pact was not working smoothly. In Bengal thousands of political prisoners remained in jail. The political situation remained fluid in certain parts of the country. So the Congress Working Committee could not spare other front-rank leaders for the Conference. G.D. Birla was a fellow delegate to the Conference. Delegates of the minorities—Muslims, Sikhs, untouchables, Parsis, Indian Christians, Anglo-Indians and Europeans had also been to London to attend the Conference.

The Conference started from September 7, 1931. The basic task before the Conference was to formulate the essentials of a Constitution for an All-India Federation. Gandhi pleaded for an honourable and equal partnership between Britain and India. He spoke that the Congress had accepted the principle

of Federation with certain 'Safeguards' meant for the interest of India. He advocated adult suffrage, a single-Chamber legislature and indirect elections.

But the Conference could not work smoothly. There was a financial crisis in Britain. The Labour Government went out of office and the new Government under Ramsay McDonald came into office. Sir Samuel Hoare, the new Secretary of State told Gandhi that he sincerely believed that Indians were unfit for self-Government. The communal problem arose. The Aga Khan was the leader of the British Indian delegation. According to Nehru, the Aga Khan was an able representative of Imperialist England at that Conference.<sup>1</sup> The irony of it was that he was supposed to represent India. The minority groups, Muslims, Anglo-Indians, Indian Christians and Scheduled Castes prepared a 'Minority Pact'. These groups advocated separate electorates. Gandhi opposed this move. He was in an extraordinary difficult position in the Conference. But he carried on and made attempt after attempt to find some basis of agreement.

The truce had been working less and less satisfactorily. The compromise between the Congress and Government had virtually broken down. So Gandhi was anxious to return to India. He tried to make the Conference a success. So he at one point agreed to accept the demands of the minority delegates, provided they would support the Congress demand for independence.

The offer, however, was not accepted. Thus the Aga Khan disliked Indian independence. It showed that the real trouble was not communal but political. The British Government had selected for the Conference all these reactionary elements.<sup>2</sup> So the Conference was bound to failure and it finally adjourned in total deadlock on December, 1931.

In his final address to the Second Round Table Conference, MacDonald said :

'If you cannot present us with a settlement acceptable to all parties as the foundation upon which to build, in that event His Majesty's Government would be compelled to apply a provisional scheme, for they are determined that even this disability

shall not be permitted to be a bar to progress. This would mean that His Majesty's Government would have to settle for you, not only your problems of representation but also to decide as wisely and justly as possible what checks and balances the Constitution is to contain to protect the minorities from an unrestricted and tyrannical use of the democratic principle expressing itself solely through majority power.<sup>3</sup>

With this announcement the Congress ideal of a united India was smashed. At the closing session Mahatma Gandhi expressed regret that a parting of the ways had come. To the Press he indicated that a resumption of mass Civil Disobedience was unlikely.

Gandhi landed at Bombay on December 28, 1931. During his absence political situation had deteriorated. The police had arrested large a number of persons in Bengal and at Chittagong. In the Frontier Province there had been clashes between the police and unarmed demonstrators. The Frontier Government had declared the 'Redshirts' illegal and Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and his brother, Dr. Khan Saheb had been arrested. There was tension in the United Provinces. A no-tax-campaign had started in that province. So Nehru was arrested on December 26, 1931. He was arrested while going to Bombay from Allahabad to meet Gandhi, who was returning from the Second London Round Table Conference.

Such was the situation which Gandhi found on his return to India. So Gandhi wrote to Willingdon protesting against the breaches of the pact. He also sought a personal interview. But he could obtain no remedy. Now the Congress began to think another Civil Disobedience campaign. But the Government was firm and on January 4, 1932, Gandhi and Sardar Patel, the Congress President, were arrested. The Government issued four new Ordinances.

In any event the Government followed a firm and repressive policy. The Congress party was outlawed. Its records destroyed, its funds confiscated and its buildings seized. Moreover, some eighty affiliated or sympathetic organizations were declared illegal—youth leagues, Kisan Sabhas, Congress-

supported schools and students clubs. Political meetings and processions were prohibited. Thus the period of temporary truce was over. The movement progressed rapidly. Many courted arrest and many were arrested. According to the Congress record no fewer than 80,000 were imprisoned in the first four months of 1932.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the bar on public meetings, the annual session of the party was held in old Delhi, on 24th April. The President elect, Pandit Malaviya was arrested on his way to the capital. But still the Conference met.

Thus the Government began with an offensive all along the line. India lived practically under Martial law and Congress never really got back the initiative or any freedom of action.

### Notes

1. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru I, p. 256.
2. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru I, p. 257.
3. Quoted in A.K. Majumdar's book "Advent of Independence", p. 125.
4. Quoted in Brecher's Nehru, p. 184.

## **THE COMMUNAL AWARD, GANDHI'S FAST, THE POONA ACT**

In August, 1932, the British Government introduced Constitutional changes in India entitled the Communal Award. This Award was first published on August 17, 1932. This scheme provided communal electorate not only for the Muslims but also for the depressed classes, Hindus, Sikhs, Indian Christians and Europeans. The depressed classes were to enjoy the double vote, for their own separate Constituencies as well as for the general (Hindu) Constituencies. Mahatma Gandhi protested against this Award. He announced on 13 September 1, 1932 that he would 'fast unto death' because of the 'Communal Award' of British Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald. It should be recalled in mind that Gandhi had been lodged in the Yeravada Prison in Poona.

This news that Gandhi would 'fast unto death' was like a bombshell<sup>1</sup> and it shook India. The fast began on September 18, (According to Nanda September 20) 1932. This day was

observed all over India as a day of fasting and prayer. The people felt the urgency of fighting an age-old evil. Temples, wells and public places were thrown open to the depressed classes. As Pandit Nehru has expressed his opinion: 'Then came news of the tremendous upheaval all over the country, a magic wave of enthusiasm running through Hindu society, and untouchability appeared to be doomed.'<sup>2</sup> To save Gandhi's precious life, a Conference of leaders of caste Hindus and depressed classes was called to replace the Communal Award. Among Communal Award provisions objectionable to Congress leaders were the following: Separate communal groups were to vote for seats allotted to Muslim, European and Sikh constituencies. Such voting, as well as other similar arrangements, could be altered only after ten years, with the assent of the communities affected. Only qualified electors not included in a Muslim, Sikh, Indian Christian, Anglo-Indian or European Constituency, were to be entitled to vote in a general Constituency. In other words, the Communal Award went counter to the democratic secular ideals of Congress.

The Hindu leaders' Conference met at Bombay. Madan Mohan Malaviya, Tej Bahadur Sapru, M.R. Jayakar, C. Rajagopalachari, N.C. Kelkar, Rajendra Prasad and Moonje, wanted quick solution. But any solution required Ambedkar's co-operation. Ambedkar stuck to the issue of separate electorate. However, on the fifth day of the fast Ambedkar agreed and an agreement was signed. This was known as the Poona Pact.

The Poona Pact doubled the representation for the depressed classes in the provincial legislatures. The electoral system was also revised. Communal Award had granted seventy-one seats to the depressed classes in the provincial legislatures. But the Poona pact conceded 148.<sup>3</sup> Thus Reservation of Seats was to continue until it was ended by mutual agreement. As described by Sitaramayya, leaders of the untouchables had every reason to be grateful, since the Pact secured them double the number of the seats granted in... Prime Minister MacDonald's previous Award...and a measure of representation somewhat in excess.

of the proportion of their population.<sup>4</sup> But Gandhi would not break his fast until the Government set its seal of approval on the Poona Pact. At last the British Cabinet accepted the Poona Pact and Gandhi broke the fast. Thus the Poona Pact was substituted for the Communal Award.

In this way the Congress won a minor victory.

### Third Rouble Table Conference 1932

There followed a third session of the Conference (November 17 December 24 1932). At the time when the Conference assembled in London, according to Nehru at that time fire raged all over India and men's and women's souls were put to the test. In India there was an amazing growth of the spirit of violence in official circles. An Inspector-General of prisons went to the length of issuing a circular to all the prisons. This circular was dated June, 30, 1932 and it contained the following : "The Inspector-General impresses upon superintendents and jail subordinates the fact that there is no justification for preferential treatment in favour of civil dis-obedience movement prisoners as such. This class require to be kept in their places and dealt with grimly."<sup>5</sup>

This session started under a great handicap. The Labour Party did not co-operate and so it was a one-party show. The Congress also did not send any representative to the Conference. Hence the Conference could not make any progress except the Government accepted responsibility for definite proposals. Those proposals were submitted to a joint Select Committee of Parliament for examination and report. Thus the White Paper contained certain results of the Conference.

### Indo-British Relations, 1931-1933

Lord Willingdon had done his utmost to paralyse the civil disobedience movement. The movement after the first flush had begun to decline. The Congress was bent, but not yet broken. Whipping became a frequent jail punishment. On April 27, 1933, the Under-Secretary for India stated in the House of Commons "That Sir Samuel Hoare was aware that

over five hundred persons in India were whipped during 1932 for offences in connection with 'the civil disobedience movement.'<sup>6</sup> The treatment of political prisoners in 1932 and 1933 was worse than it had been two years earlier. This could not have been due merely to the deliberate policy of the Government.

### Gandhi's Fast of May, 1933

Early in May 1933, Gandhi began his twenty-one day fast for 'Self-purification' in Yeravada jail. It was hoped that Gandhi would not survive this ordeal. But he belied the fears of the Government, his associates and doctors and survived the fast.<sup>7</sup> He had undertaken his fast as a self-purificatory process for inducing in the workers connected with the Harijan (Untouchable) movement a purer spirit of service." He was released in July 1933.

He decided to call off the Civil Disobedience Movement. So he wanted to meet the Viceroy. But he did not get the permission to meet him. He was rebuffed and now events moved rapidly. He decided to resume civil disobedience and this was meant for selected individuals.

He announced his intention to march from his Ashram at Ahmedabad to Rasa Village in Gujerat. So he was arrested on August 1. He was brought to Poona, released and ordered to reside within the limits of Poona city. He defied the order, was rearrested and sentenced to a year's imprisonment. He again began a fast on Augst 16 and so he was released on the sixth day of the fast.

Gradually, the Civil Disobedience Movement declined; but still it was carried on. It now ceased to be a mass movement. This movement was finally killed for all practical purposes by the suspension of it in May 1933. It continued after that more in theory than in practice.<sup>8</sup> Thus there was slow decay of a great movement.

Now when Gandhi came out of jail, he announced that for the next eleven months, he would abstain from civil disobedience. In a sense this was the final suspension of the movement.

The individual civil disobedience which had been in force since July 1933, had now been restricted to Gandhi's person. The movement was now completely dead.

On June 6, 1934, the Government of India announced that since Civil disobedience had been formally discontinued, so the notifications which had declared the Congress Organisation illegal were being withdrawn.

Thus the Civil Disobedience Movement failed. Gandhi said that the causes of failure of the movement were that his message of non-violence had not gone home and that the country needed further discipline in the non-violence. But according to Congressmen, the repressive policy of the Government was the main reason for its failure. Several thoughtful Congressmen believed that the sacrifices of the people had not gone in vain.

Dr. Ansari expressed his opinion whether the movement had failed : "It used to be said of non-cooperation of 1920-21 that it had failed. How far it had failed was revealed when without any preparation the country was called upon to embark once more on the civil disobedience movement in 1930. The tremendous response that the Congress received from the people is the measure of success of non-cooperation. It is again said that the present civil disobedience movement has failed. But has it failed ? The marvellous spirit that the mass movement had at its inception cannot in the very nature of things sustain itself except for a short time....Abandonment of the movement will not mean abandonment of methods as such. It would only mean that having fought long enough we prepare to rest."<sup>9</sup>

After the suspension of civil disobedience, there was the revival of the Swaraj Party. Gandhi also felt that the rank and file of the Congress did not understand non-violence in the same way as he believed. He felt that there was great difference between himself and the intelligentsia in the Congress. So he retired from the Congress on 17th September, 1934. Henceforth, for the next three years he was concerned with village economics and not politics.

**Notes**

1. Norman, Dorothy Nehru I, p. 271.
2. Ibid., p. 272.
3. Nanda, B.R., Mahatma Gandhi, p. 351.
4. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru I, p. 274.
5. Ibid., p. 275.
6. Ibid., p. 275.
7. Nanda, B.R., Mahatma Gandhi, p. 362.
8. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru I, p. 291.
9. Nanda, B.R., Mahatma Gandhi, p. 367.

## SIX

### 1935 GOVERNMENT OF INDIA ACT

After the Third Round Table Conference of 1932, the British Government drafted a provisional Constitution for India, issued a White paper in 1933. Subsequently, a joint Committee on Indian Constitutional reform was set up. Its report, made public in 1934, formed the basis of the India Bill, introduced in the British Parliament in January, 1935. It was not until August 1935, after six years of discussions that the Bill finally became law. It was thereafter referred to as the Government of India Act 1935. The Act remained in effect until India became a Republic in January 1950.<sup>1</sup> This Act, suitably amended served as the constitution of the Dominion of India from 1947 to 1950.

Every section of public opinion in India expressed dissatisfaction with the Government of India Act of 1935. The spokesman of the Moderate party, C.Y. Chintamani observed ; 'Indian opinion was almost stunned by the result of years of agitation and cogitation, and many sections of it, including the

liberal, felt and said that it would have been far better if no reform had been attempted'.

The main features of the Act may be summarised as follows : "In view of the federal form of Government envisaged at the Centre, the Provinces were endowed for the first time with a legal personality. Dyarchy was abolished, and all the Provincial subjects were transferred to popular control. Certain 'special' responsibilities' were, however, laid upon the Governors as before. Bicameral legislatures were established in Madras, Bombay, Bengal, the United Province, Bihar and Assam, and the other Provinces continued to have only unicameral legislatures. There was no change in principle in the allocation of seats among the different communities and special interests, the Communal Award as modified by the Poona pact, regulating the distribution of seats among the former. Property qualifications continued to be the main basis for enfranchisement, a very much higher standard being adopted for the Upper Houses.

"As regards the Centre, the Federation of India was to be inaugurated only after rulers representing not less than half the aggregate population of the Indian States and entitled to one-half of the seats allotted to them collectively in the Federal Upper chamber had executed Instruments of Accession.

"As the country was considered to be not yet ready for the transfer of full responsibility at the Centre, a dyarchic executive was provided for as was hitherto prevalent in the Provinces.<sup>2</sup>

Every sections of the Indian population criticised this Act. According to prof. A.B. Keith, one of Britain's leading authorities on the Constitutional History of India, "It is difficult to resist the impression that either responsible Government should have been frankly declared impossible or the reality conceded....For the federal scheme it is difficult to feel any satisfaction....It is too obvious that on the British side the scheme is favoured in order to provide an element of pure conservatism in order to combat any dangerous elements of democracy contributed by British India ...It is difficult to deny the justice of the contention in India that federation was largely

evoked by the desire to evade the issue of extending responsible government to the central government of British India. Moreover, the withholding of defence and external affairs from federal control, inevitable as the course is, renders the alleged concession of responsibility all but meaningless."<sup>3</sup>

Against this unfavourable comment, few British Statesmen spoke highly about this Act. Lord Lytton, a former Governor of an Indian province, who acted as Viceroy for a while, is reported to have said in the House of Lords, December 17, 1934 that "the Government of India was far more representative of India as a whole than the Congress politicians."<sup>4</sup> Winston Churchill spoke in this way on February 11, 1935 "We have as good a right to be in India as anyone there except, perhaps, the Depressed classes, who are the original stock. Our Government is not an irresponsible Government. It is a Government responsible to the Crown and to Parliament. It is incomparably the best Government that India has ever seen or will see."<sup>5</sup>

By way of contrast with the above, it is interesting to note the following excerpt from Clement Attlee's speech relating to the same Bill, delivered on June 4, 1935 : "The question that we should put is this. Does this Constitutional scheme provide a medium through which the living forces of India can operate, because what we have to deal with are the forces of modern India, a living India, and not the dead India of the past ? If we are to do anything with India, we have to bring modern forces into play ...For good or ill, the Congress party is one of the dominating factors in the situation. It is no use ignoring it; and it is useless and futile merely to abuse it."<sup>6</sup>

**Notes**

1. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru, I, p. 363.
2. Quoted in R.C. Majumdar's book, "Freedom Movement", p. 532.
3. Keith, A.B., A Constitutional History of India, p. 473-74.
4. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru I, p. 370.
5. Ibid., p. 370.
6. Ibid, p. 371.

## SEVEN

### CHARACTERISTIC OF THE INDIAN FEDERATION OF 1935

The Act of 1935 tried to reverse the centralising process which had been going on for more than a century. It conferred on the provinces full autonomy, had never enjoyed before and gave Provincial Autonomy and the Federal scheme at the same time a legal basis that is to say, both were established by a Parliamentary Statute and not evolved by the Indian themselves. Federation in this sense therefore came to be an imposed federation. This was bound to happen because in the first place the Act of 1919 had made the Imperial Parliament the sole judge of the time and nature of advance and in the second place the Round Table Conference had failed to reach an agreement. Even though this Federation came to be an imposed one, the Federal idea struck root in the Indian mind also. The Muslim minority felt that it could have adequate safeguards only in a Federation of completely autonomous units. The Princes also felt inclined towards a federal solution. They

were not satisfied with the interpretation of paramountcy by the Butler Committee. So they voiced their feeling in favour of a Federation for All-India including the states at the first Round Table Conference in London in 1930. The British Government believed that the federal Government at the Centre associated with the ruling princes would exert a weak influence under the system of full Provincial Autonomy. But there were also voices against the projected federation. Many felt among whom were Britishers and Indians alike that Federation meant weak government, divided allegiance and slow administration.

They felt also that India divided within herself for centuries had at last achieved a unity under British rule, which created a strong nationalistic feeling. A Federation would reverse this process, break India once more and retard the political and economical development of the country indefinitely. But all these criticisms were silenced by the growing urge towards some sort of Federation and this federal idea dominated all constitutional discussion.

But the projected Indian Federation came to be a good deal different from the other Federations within the British Commonwealth. In Canada the distributions of power left a wide field for concurrent legislation. In Australia the residuary power belonged to the virtually independent states. In the Indian Federation the division of powers as between the Centre and the Provinces was made as exhaustive as possible and therefore rigid, while the Governor-General was empowered over an undefined field to allocate to the Federal Government or to the Federating units, powers to legislate on matters on which the Act of 1935 was silent. In Canada the Lieutenant-Governors were appointed and dismissed by the Governor-General in Council. In Australia the state Governors were subject only to the British Government at home and exercised the prerogative concurrently with the Governor-General. In India while provincial Governors were directly appointed by the Crown in the exercise of the Royal prerogative they were subject to the Control of the Governor-General and the Secretary of State.

In Canada Provincial Legislation might be disallowed by the Dominion Government. In Australia no such disallowances by the Commonwealth was possible and after the Statute of Westminster even disallowances by the Home Government has vanished but India was not till amenable to the Statute of Westminster and so the power of disallowance by the Home Government remained. In Canada amendment of the Constitution proceeds from a request from both Houses of the Dominion Parliament based upon an agreement of the province. The British Parliament then passes the amendment bill. In Australia the Commonwealth Parliament passes an amendment bill which is then submitted to a referendum. In India on the contrary the power to alter the Constitution according to the Act of 1935 was vested entirely in the British Parliament. In Canada and Australia the Supreme Court and the High Court respectively interpret the Constitution and after the Statute of West-minster appeals to the Privy Council have been optional. In India according to the Act of 1935 Constitutional issues were to be dealt with partly by the High Courts, and partly by the Federal Court, but the final interpretation should proceed from the Privy Council, appeals to which could not be prevented by any Indian Legislature. In other Federations the Executive Head is elected by the people for example in the U.S.A. or nominated by the Crown on the advice of Federal Cabinet, for example in Canada and Australia. But in India the Govenor-General was to be appointed by the Crown on the advice of the British Cabinet and he had according to the Act of 1935 extra-ordinary legislative power, which no other head of a Federal Government enjoyed.

In spite of these distinguishing features of the Indian Federation, which were not calculated to make Indian Federation a true federation, there was nevertheless a desire for it. In the first place the British Government found in the projected Federation a solvent of the Indian Constitutional problem, a federation with the native states included would be a steady influence and the special responsibilities of the Governor-General and the Provincial Governor would maintain a strong

Executive at the Centre and would therefore minimise the dangers of decentralisation.

In the second place the Princes agreed to a Federation believing that they would be in a position to tone down the rigidity of the paramountcy as defined by the Butler Committee. At the first Round Table Conference therefore the Maharaja of Bikaner declared: 'An Indian Federation has no terror for the Princes.' Thirdly, the Indian minorities especially the Muslims found in a Federation only the solution of their demand for a separate existence. Fourthly, even the progressive Indian leaders like Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru welcomed a Federation, because it was only through a Federation that the Government at the Centre would move forward towards full responsible Government, however slowly and would also draw to itself the Indian States. Above all the enormous size of India and its infinite variety made federalism the only solution.

The Indian States whose entry into the projected Indian federation was the most vital issue in this context agreed to a federation because paramountcy as defined from time to time by the Governor-General proved unacceptable and so the Princes thought eventually of some kind of Federation. The Butler Committee stated with regards to paramountcy that it was "the living-growing relationship shaped by circumstances policies which was a mixture of history, theory and modern facts." It was further said by a member of the Committee that "paramountcy was only a part of prerogative." This view was finally endorsed by Sir Samuel Hoare, while introducing Government of India Bill in the House of Commons in 1935. Since then the Indian states realised the true implications of paramountcy.

Therefore when the first Round Table Conference met there was from the side of the Princes a chorus of approval of the Federal idea. The Princes perhaps thought at that time that a federation with British India would have effect of toning down the rigid ideas of paramountcy as explained by the Butler Committee. But gradually as the full implications of the

projected Federation came to be understood, the early enthusiasm began to disappear and establishment of an Indian Federation as envisaged by the Government of India Act was hedged round with so many conditions that the Federal part of the Act of 1915 was never fulfilled.

## **E I G H T**

### **FEDERAL EXECUTIVE**

The Montagu-Chelmsford Reform had left the Central Government irresponsible giving only partial responsibility to the provinces. Simon Commission had recommended full responsibility to the provinces but denied it to the Central Government. In spite of the excellence of the recommendation of the Simon Commission in other respects, this denial of responsibility to the Centre vitiated the whole scheme. Hence the Act of 1935 envisaged a Central Executive in which responsible government was to be tried in a novel and experimental manner. The Simon Commission had advocated a total abolition of Dyarchy in the provinces and had likewise categorically rejected the idea of a Dyarchy at the Centre because it would have split up the administration, the unity of which was to be maintained at any cost. But the Act of 1935 introduced this very Dyarchy at the Centre.

The Governor-General had been given the Executive power and authority of the Federation as the representative of the

King. He also exercised certain prerogatives of the King which had been defined in the Instrument of Instruction issued to him. The Executive authority of the Federation extended to all matters in respect of which the Federal legislature could legislate and also to certain matters in the provinces and the state except those which were purely provincial or belonged exclusively to the federating states according to the Instrument of Accession. The Federal subjects were divided into those reserved to the Governor-General himself or those which had been transferred to Ministers.

Defence External Relation, Ecclesiastical Affairs and Administration of Tribal Areas were reserved exclusively to the Governor-General, who was to administer them in his own dispositions. The remaining Federal subjects were committed to the Council of Ministers. Even in regard to the Transferred subjects, the Governor-General had special responsibilities for the due discharge of which he was to act in his own discretion. Defence, External Affairs etc. which were exclusively reserved to the Governor-General, were managed by him with the assistance of three Counsellors, appointed by him. Their salaries and conditions of service had been fixed by His Majesty in Council. Each Counsellor was ex-officio member of both Houses of the Federal Legislature, with full freedom to take part in debate but without the right to vote. In the matter of Defence consultation of Ministers by the Governor-General was recommended under the Instrument of Instruction.

Beside these matters which were dealt with Governor-General with the aid of three Counsellors, the Governor-General had certain special responsibilities in specified matters. He was to consult his Ministers. He used to appoint the Ministers. But he took the decision according to his judgement. The Special responsibilities were (1) prevention of any grave menace to the peace and tranquility of India or any part thereof; (2) the safeguarding of the financial stability and the credit of the Federal Government in the World money market; (3) safeguarding of the legitimate interest of the minorities;

(4) security of the public service and safeguarding their legitimate interests; (5) prevention of any discriminatory action against British imports or imports from Burma; (6) protection of the right of Indian state and of the dignity of their rulers and (7) securing due discharge of an action taken by the Governor-General in his discretion or in individual judgement.

In the discharge of these responsibilities the Governor-General was guided by Instrument of Instructions which not only covered these special responsibilities but also those matters in which he was to exercise his individual judgement. The Instrument was a part of the Act and a special feature. The Secretary of State prepared a draft instrument which was approved of by both houses of Parliament. It was not a bill. It was issued by the Crown in the exercise of its prerogative and could not be amended or rejected by the Parliament. This procedure in preparing the draft instrument was peculiar to India and was not adopted even under the Act of 1919 nor this procedure was in vogue in British Colony and Dominion. In the case of Dominion the Instrument of Instruction issued under royal prerogative alone without the approval of Parliament was specially designed to help the Dominion Governor-General in stimulating the growth of responsible Government in Dominions. In the case of India Parliamentary sanction was insisted on and Parliament alone decided the time and manner of advance of responsible Government in India.

The lists of the legislative powers of the Governor-General were mentioned in chapter IV of part-II of the Act. Until now, the Governor-General was an important factor of the legislative machinery of the country. Under the Act of 1935, he retained these powers in an undiminished form.

The previous assent of the Governor-General was required in case of the introduction of bills of certain categories in either House of the legislature. Secondly, he had the right to veto all bills which had been passed by the two Chambers of the legislature. These included even those bills whose introduction he might have sanctioned. Thirdly, he had the privilege of

making certain permanent and certain temporary laws on his own responsibility alone. In order to meet a particular emergency, he had the right to promulgate an ordinance at a time when the legislature was not in session. This ordinance had the effect of a law and remained in operation until the legislature met. If, however, the legislature approved the resolution, then it remained in force for six weeks more during which period some permanent legislative arrangement was made for meeting the particular situation of the country which necessitated the promulgation of ordinances.

In certain other category of emergencies, the Governor-General had the authority to issue an ordinance which remained in force for six months irrespective of the wishes of the legislature. On the expiry of this period he could extend the life of this measure for another six months. Lastly in order to carry out the function which the Governor-General was to exercise in his discretion under the Act, he would require the passing of some permanent law.

In the exercise of his discretionary power, the Governor-General was not bound to consult his Ministers. There were 91 sections in the Act, where were a mention of the powers of the Governor-General to be exercised in his discretion.

The Governor-General had the power of individual judgement also. There were 32 sections of the Act, where the Governor-General used his individual judgement. The Ministers were given the right of being consulted.

In other sections of the Act, the Governor-General followed the advice tendered by the Ministers. The Governor-General had also the power to suspend the Constitution under section 45 of the Act.

The Instrument of Instruction together with the special responsibilities of the Governor-General took away a large part of the domain over which responsible Government was to flourish. The reserved subjects were administered by the Governor-General with the help of the Executive counsellors, while those subjects which were given over to popular Ministers

were vitiated by Special responsibility of the Governor-General, 'Too narrowly interpreted the responsibilities might destroy the possibility of the responsibility.<sup>1</sup>

### Notes

1. Keith, A.B., *A Constitution | History of India*, p. 334.

## FEDERAL LEGISLATURE

The Federal Legislature consisted of two Houses—the Council of State and the House of Assembly. The Legislature almost everywhere consists of two houses on the age-old ground that the decision by one house may be hasty and rash and should on that account be revised calmly by another chamber. The Central Legislature in Federal Unions again is invariably bi-cameral on the special ground that the one house is to represent the nation and the other house is to represent the units. The lower house is to enshrine the national idea and represent and uphold national interests, while the upper house is to enshrine the federal idea and buttress in the interests of the federal units as such. Bi-cameralism in a federal legislature is thus taken as the inevitable result of the compromise between national and local forces, which is accommodated in the Act of 1935.

The Federal Assembly consisted of 250 members from British India and a maximum of 125 members from the Indian.

States. The States therefore obtained 33% representation in the lower House, although their population was 23% of the total population of India. Moreover this representation of States presumably was on the basis of nomination by the rulers and not through election. A significant feature of the lower house was that it was indirectly elected and not popularly elected, as is the case in every federal lower house. The question of election to the lower house of the federation passed through many phases and controversies. Final solution was the decision of the joint Parliamentary Committee for indirect election. Indirect election to the lower House was to be on the basis of proportional representation by the single transferable vote and by means of communal electorate in the provinces which was based upon the well-known Communal Award of Ramsay MacDonald. The Hindu, Muhammadan and Sikhs "Should be filled by the representatives of those communities in the Provincial Assembly voting separately for prescribed number of communal seats". The same was also recommended for the scheduled class seats. This arrangement was revised by the Poona Pact and the scheduled class candidates were to be chosen on a basis of joint electorate by the Provincial Assembly. Out of candidates selected by the scheduled class voters, members finally chosen by the provincial legislature were to occupy a fixed number of seats taken from the caste Hindu constituencies. For the return of European and Anglo-Indians and Indian Christians Provincial Assemblies were unsuitable and they were to be chosen on an All India basis.

The Council of State consisted of 260 of whom 40 per cent were members chosen by the States. Strangely enough while the Federal lower house was to be recruited through indirect election, the Council of State was to be recruited directly. Apart from the state representatives who were to be the nominees of the rulers, of the British Indian representation six were to be nominated by the Governor-General and the rest elected on a communal or a group basis. The Council of State was to be a permanent body not subject to dissolution. One-third of the members however retired every three years.

### Relation Between the Two Houses

A Second chamber was to be set up according to the opinion of the Bryce Conference (1917) in order that bills introduced in and passed by the lower house might be minutely examined and revised by this body. This careful revision would remove the technical flaws from which a statute might often suffer. Secondly, non-controversial bills might be introduced in the second chamber. The second chamber is a secondary chamber in all the post-war constitutions of central Europe.

The framers of the Government of India Act did not consider all these facts. Under the Act of 1935 the demands for grants must be first submitted to the Federal Assembly. Except this, the Federal Assembly had the same powers and privileges as the upper house.

The Council of State was a conservative body. Hence it was expected that this house would not pass any progressive bill.

The Federal Assembly was also a conservative house, because one-third of its members were nominated by rulers of Indian States. The British Indian representatives were also in touch with popular suffrage and democratic fervour.

Secondly, the enjoyment of equal powers by the two Houses were serious obstacle to the growth of true responsible Government in the Centre. The Federal Ministers were required to hold their office during the pleasure of the legislature. The Council of Ministers at the Centre were required to hold their office during the pleasure of the legislature. But how they could be responsible to both Houses? Development of true responsible Government presupposes the predominance of one chamber. The Act of 1935 made the system complex and uncertain by preventing the possibility of such predominance on the part of the Assembly.

Equal powers for two Houses had another serious defect in that if they disagreed, there would have been deadlock in legislation and administration. In case of deadlock, a provision had been made for joint meeting of the two Houses.

The greatest defect of this arrangement was that while the conservative and reactionary bills would have been passed by the joint meeting it would have made very difficult for a progressive measure to be put upon the statute book. The Council of State was a citadel of conservative elements and the Federal Assembly would have also consisted of a large body of conservative persons. So progressive measures would not be passed even in the joint session of the legislature.

Anyway, the arrangement would have been less cumbrous and more business like if the Council of State instead of being elevated to a co-ordinate status, were relegated to a definitely subordinate role.

## FEDERAL FINANCE

Federal Finance proved to be one of the most difficult problems to the Constitution-Makers. Mr. Layton's scheme was there and it was made the basis of the new financial settlement but the issue was so subtle and likely to effect the new administration in so many ways that the Act of 1935 only supplied an outline of the scheme of the Federal finance and the details were filled in by an Order in Council on the report of Sir Otto Niemeyer. Sir Otto Niemeyer had been commissioned to go into the question in great detail. If the problem of allocation of revenue between the federation and the units was difficult, even more difficult was the distribution of revenues among the units themselves.

It was a fact that the Centre was in possession of sources of revenue which were likely to expand, while certain provinces like industrialised Bengal and Bombay were in need of greater financial assistance from the Centre. The Indian States also pressed for a share in the steady increase of share from customs duties which their subjects had to pay. It was also felt that

many of the provinces were likely to remain deficit provinces for many years to come, for example, Sindh, Orissa, Assam and N.W.F.P....The separation of Burma entailed a net loss of revenue to the Central Government to the extent of three crores of rupees. The inauguration of the new reforms would entail a considerable initial expenditure and the provinces should have a fair balance sufficient to launch them on the road to autonomy. Keeping these problems and facts in view Sir Otto Niemeyer made the following recommendations :

(1) Of the revenue from jute export duty, 62 per cent is assigned to the jute growing areas, namely, Bengal, Bihar, Assam, Orissa in proportion to the crops therein.

(2) 50 per cent of the net proceeds of the income tax from provincial sources belonged to the provinces and the sums should be distributed in certain proportions. Bengal and Bombay, the most industrialised provinces to get the largest share. But this allocation of 50 per cent income tax was not to take effect at once. During the first five years the Federal Government might withhold a part or whole of this amount and during the next five years also the Central Government might withhold certain proportions, if the income from the railways did not reach a certain figure. It is therefore clear that the provisions for the assignment of 50 per cent of income tax was only a paper provision.

Hence at the beginning of the Provincial Autonomy the provinces were left uncertain as to the amount which they might have from the Central Government for their expanding social service for which in consequence they had to depend upon the retrenchment, borrowing and new taxation. The original Order in Council of 1936 was even amended in 1940 by which the Central Government retained over a long period a substantial share of the proceeds of the income tax which ordinarily should have gone to the provinces.

(3) The Niemeyer report also included a scheme of taxation of the Indian States by the federal Centre in the matter of surcharge of income tax and customs duty. The States also were to share with the provinces, the corporation tax and the

salt duty. Moreover indirect contributions by the states to the Crown were also provided for. On the other hand contributions by the crown to the states were also envisaged.

(4) Under the new financial scheme grants were to be made by the King in Council to such provinces as may be held to be in need of the financial assistance. The grants arranged in 1936 were : U.P. 25 lakhs for 5 years, Assam 30 Lakhs, N.W.F.P. 100 Lakhs for 5 years, Orissa 40 lakhs, Sind 110 lakhs in the first year with 105 lakhs thereafter on a diminishing scale till the Sallar Barrage Scheme begins to yield a sufficient revenue.

(5) In order to maintain financial stability it was from the first recognised that provisions must be made to insure that the control of currency and credit including the issue of bank notes and the maintenance of reserves was entrusted to a non-political authority. Hence in 1934 the Reserve Bank of India Act was passed and the Bank began to operate in 1935. The appointment of the Directorate of the bank was placed in the hands of the Governor-General, who in all matters relating to bank constitution was to act in his individual judgement and no bill effecting currency or coinage could be introduced in the legislature without his sanction.

(6) The king was also authorised to appoint an Auditor-General. His status conformed to be that of a Federal judge. His duties were laid down in Orders in Council covering both provincial and federal finance and his reports were to be laid before federal and provincial legislatures. "It is difficult to deny the justice of the contention in India that federation was largely evoked by the desire to evade the issue extending responsible Government to the Central Government of British India."<sup>1</sup>

#### Notes

1 Keith, A. B.. A Constitutional History of India, p. 274.



# Part III

## ONE

### **PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURES UNDER THE ACT OF 1935**

Under the 1919 reforms Act Provincial Legislatures had been unicameral. By the Act of 1935 six out of eleven Governor's provinces got bicameral legislatures. Only Orissa, C.P., Sindh, N.W.F.P. and the Punjab were left with single chamber. The bicameral system devised for six Provinces by the Act of 1935 was hardly necessary. In India there had been no tradition of a second chamber acting as a steadyng and revising authority. But the fear was that under the new scheme and with the experience of land legislation put through by Congress in the last Councils, the new legislatures would be dominated by extremists element and so the need was felt for a representation of the vested interests in the new second chamber. Hence in Assam where the tea planters had important estates, a second chamber was adopted. Likewise in Bengal, Bihar U.P. where Zamindars and Talukdars formed a substantial group, provision was made for second chamber. But, experience proved that the

fear from the rash legislation was groundless. Moreover in view of the special responsibilities of Provincial Governors, it was hardly likely that any progressive measures could be hastily placed on the statute book. It was part of the special responsibilities of a Governor to protect the interests of minorities' cultural, religious or economic aspects. The purpose of second chambers was in fact served by the special responsibilities of the Governors. These second chambers called Legislative Councils were constituted roughly on the same communal basis as the lower house. Members of these Councils were partly nominated by the Governor, partly elected by communal territorial constituents and partly indirectly elected by the lower house on a system of proportional representation. But on the whole the communal balance in the two houses was roughly maintained. In Bengal for example the communal balance in the two chambers was almost the same and thus the expectations that communal tension in the lower house would be rectified in the upper house was belied.

The Lower House or Legislative Assembly had a minimum membership of 50 in the N.W.F.P. and a maximum membership of 250 as in Bengal. The principle of nomination was entirely abandoned. The official block disappeared and together with it the non-official nominated block also. The Assembly was constituted on the basis of communities and interests, such as traders, industrialists, labourers and landholders, cultural interests like those of Muslims, Sikhs and Europeans.

The representation of racial minority proved to be a good stumbling block. The Simon Commission had no doubt made certain recommendations but they were no final solutions of the problem. The Lucknow Pact of 1916 no longer satisfied the racial minorities. The Muslims particularly demanded that if in a province they were in majority, they should have a majority representation on population basis and if a minority they should have weightage. The Minority Sub-committee of the Round Table Conference failed to come to a decision. The matter was referred to for arbitration to Ramsay MacDonald and the result was the Communal Award of 1932 which as revised

by the Pona Paci, came to govern the communal composition of the new legislature.

About franchise the recommendations of the Franchise Committee were finally accepted. Direct election was adopted and an extension of electorate was recommended. Adult franchise as advocated by the Congress was not adopted. But the Act of 1935 extended the franchise to nearly 3½ million people and the number of women voters was considerably enlarged.

## T W O

### **RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT AND PROVINCIAL AUTONOMY**

The Federal part of the Act of 1935 ceased to function on account to stiff attitude of rulers of Indian states. The most conspicuous feature that now remained was the responsible Government in the provinces. The Dyarchy of 1919 had failed. The Act of 1935 designed full responsibility for the provinces as autonomous units of the proposed federation.

The Congress had accepted the Act of 1935, so a general election took place in the country in 1937. The general election of 1937 was important in many respects. There were 33½ crores voters in the country.<sup>1</sup> Of the 1,585 seats the Congress won 711 seats. The Congress got clear majority in Bombay, Madras, U.P., C.P., Bihar and Orissa. By contrast, the Muslim league secured only 4.8 per cent of the total Muslim vote. Nor did it win a majority of seats in any of the four Muslim-majority provinces.<sup>2</sup>

Before accepting office in these provinces, Congress wanted to make it clear that the Governor would not exercise the special powers of interference or set aside the advice of ministers in regard to their Constitutional activity. This matter had been discussed by the All India Congress Committee. This was a perfectly legitimate demand according to authority on Constitutional law like Keith and even though for example the liberals who did not subscribe to the Congress creed of rejecting the Constitution as a whole or of making the provincial scheme unworkable also believed that this was no unjust demand. The issue came to a head in Bombay where the leader of the Congress majority asked for an assurance : "That His Excellency would not use in regard to the Constitutional activity of the Cabinet, his special powers of intervention or set aside the advice of his Minister". The Governor replied that the obligations imposed upon him by the Instrument of Instruction in respect of special powers and safe-guarding the minorities were of such a nature that even if he wished it, he could not relieve himself of them. Similar cries were received from other provincial Governors. It was clear that this expression of a rigid view of special responsibility was dictated by the Secretary of State, Ford Zetland. He had made a speech in the House of Lords that the special responsibilities were the integral part of the Act of 1935 and as such could not be abrogated. In fact, this was a glaring instance of conflict between the law of the Constitution and customs of Constitution or convention. The Secretary of State was technically right but politically unwise. Congress was asking for non-interference only in the Constitutional and not unconstitutional activity of Minister. Constitutionally as in England and the Dominion the Ministers were expected to maintain law and order and the civil service to safeguard the minorities. The refusal of the Governors at the dictation of the White-hall to admit this obvious implication of responsible government betrayed a suspicion of the bonafides of the British Government.

Moreover, the majority party having refused to form the Cabinet, a deadlock ensued in six provinces and the Governors

appointed ad-interim Ministers (April 1, 1937) who had no backing in the Legislature. The legislatures themselves were not summoned, as this would have inevitably led to the defeat of the ad-interim ministries and a sharpening of the conflict.<sup>3</sup>

The formation of ad-interim ministries was not technically illegal. The Act of 1935 permitted this and this was an obvious alternative to the dissolution of Legislature or the application of section 93 under which a Governor himself assumed charge of any province. But the very fact that Constitution of 1935 permitted this, showed that provincial responsibility as devised by the Act was no true responsibility. When the minority ministries were appointed, there was no intention to go back upon the pledge of responsible Government. All that was attempted was some Constitutional machinery which might carry on day to day administration without a dissolution of legislature. The Congress also got sufficient time to reconsider its attitude and ultimately agreed to work the Constitution. This proved true. Fresh attempts were made for reconciliation.

However, after a prolonged controversy the viceroy made a detailed pronouncement assuring "the utmost degree practicable of harmonious co-operation between the Government and the people and to "avoid in every way consistent with the special responsibilities for minorities and the like which the Act imposes, any such clash of opinion as would be calculated unnecessary to break down the Ministry."<sup>4</sup> The Provincial Governors also played a role, specially the Governor of Bihar. He gave the assurance that the special responsibility would be liberally interpreted and that as far as possible Governors would accommodate the constitutional advice of their Ministers. The Congress was willing to accept office. The Working Committee of the Indian National Congress met and on July 7, 1937, it was decided to permit acceptance of Cabinet responsibilities. Within a few days of this resolution of the Working Committee, the leaders of Congress Parties in the six provinces were invited to form Cabinets and they accepted

the invitation. The Constitutional dead-lock thus ended.<sup>5</sup> Ultimately there were Congress Governments in eight of the eleven provinces. Congress Ministries were formed in Bombay, Madras, U.P., Bihar, C.P., Orissa, N.W.F.P. and Assam.

But Congress policy within the legislature came to be controlled by the Congress Parliamentary Board of three under the direction of Working Committee. This Central Organisation imposed a uniform policy upon all provinces, namely the policy of proving the hollowness of the reform and fighting federation and preparing the ground for a constituent Assembly, which alone could frame a Constitution for India. Thus the Provincial Scheme of 1935 like that of 1919 was not genuinely worked and special conditions prevailing in the provinces were overlooked and the entire policy of provincial Ministry was subordinated to the policy of the Congress Working Committee at the Centre.

At the beginning however some notable achievements were made. The very coming of Congress into office created a change of atmosphere. Much useful legislation was done specially in the social and economic spheres but more legislation did not go very far and Congress Ministries soon realized that they were up against enormous odds. Finance again became one of the great stumbling blocks. Excessive salaries of the members of I.C.S. proved to be a financially bar to the much needed social reform and much of the legislation of the Congress Ministries was rendered practically valueless owing to the indifference or opposition of the I.C.S., which was amenable to the Secretary of State alone and did not owe to the new Ministry that loyalty without which reforms could not succeed. Beside I.C.S., people had direct access to the provincial Governor. They stole a march upon ministers.

It is a controversial point whether the Congress majorities tyrannised upon the minorities and thus paved the way for their own downfall. Keith for example thus does recognise this fact.<sup>6</sup> Though the Muslim League was not admitted into the Government, many nationalist Muslims were admitted and there was also the fear that if the Muslim minority was persecuted

in a Congress dominated province, there might be retribution against the non-Muslim in the predominantly Muslim provinces. For nearly two years the Congress Ministries carried on the administration on the progressive lines and carried through much useful legislation, in spite of the natural handicap imposed by the Constitution itself.

For over twelve years the Congress had been anticipating the out-break of a Second Great European war and warning the country against rendering any kind of measure of help to Britain in money, men or ammunitions. At last the long apprehended war broke out on the 1st September, 1939. Lord Linlithgow, Viceroy of India, promptly declared India to be at war on September 3, the same day on which both great Britain and France declared war on Germany. Without consulting either a single Indian national leader or any leader of the eleven provinces enjoying provincial autonomy in India, the British plunged India into a world war against totalitarian oppression, at a moment when her own freedom seemed more cruelly remote than ever before. In addition to which an amendment to the Government of India Act of 1935 was rushed through the British Parliament in eleven minutes, empowering the Viceroy to override the provisions of the Act even with respect to provincial autonomy. The same day a Defence of India Ordinance was issued by the Viceroy, considerably curtailing the civil liberties of the Indian people.

On September 11, 1939 a week after Britain had declared war on behalf of India, the Viceroy announced the postponement of plans to complete 'federation' within India until after the war.

On September 14, 1939, the Congress Working Committee met to consider the current situation. In conformity with its policy, it made the first of many strong protests it was to issue during the war period. Although Nehru favoured supporting the Allies in opposition to the Axis powers throughout the war, he found it impossible to approve of India's becoming involved in the war effort without freedom being guaranteed to her.<sup>7</sup> The Working Committee invited the British Government to declare in clear terms what their war aims were in

regard to democracy and imperialism and the new order that was envisaged; in particular how these aims were going to apply and to be given effect to in the present.

On October 17, 1939, the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow announced that the 1935 Government of India Act would be modified to the extent deemed desirable by the British. Only Dominion Status, but not complete independence, would be granted to India after the war. The British offered to include a greater number of Indians in the Viceroy's Executive Council.

With respect to the Congress desire for self-Government, Lord Linlithgow declared that the situation must be faced in terms of "world politics" political realities "and practical considerations."<sup>8</sup>

The Congress Working Committee met at Wardha to consider the Viceroy's statement on October 22, 1939. The Working Committee was of the opinion that the Viceroy's statement was wholly unsatisfactory and calculated to rouse resentment among all those who were anxious to gain India's independence.

The Committee regarded the Viceroy's statement as in every way unfortunate. The resolution went on : 'In the circumstances, the Committee cannot possibly give any support to Great Britain, for it would amount to an endorsement of the imperialist policy which the Congress has always sought to end. As a first step in this direction, the Committee called upon the Congress Ministries to tender their resignation.'

Before the resignation of the Congress Government in the provinces, the Congress attempted to approach Mr. M.A. Jinnah and the Muslim League. The Congress leaders met Jinnah but much progress was not made. On the one hand the Congress Ministry was coming out of office, on the other hand Jinnah was thinking to celebrate the resignation of Congress Ministry as "Day of Deliverance". Pt. Nehru wrote a letter to Jinnah on October 18, 1939 and requested Jinnah not to celebrate December 22, 1939 as "Day of Deliverance". But Jinnah did not agree to this suggestion.

By November 15, 1939, Congress Ministries in eight provinces had resigned, one after the other, in protest against the Viceroy's statement of October 1939. Now provincial administration in each case was assumed by the Governor under section 93 of the Act of 1935.

Philips has regarded the resignation of the Congress Ministries in 1939 as an unwise act. By 1942 the Congress leaders felt that their relinquishment of office in provinces was a mistake. K.M. Munshi deplored the decision of the Congress to resign their office in 1939.

Mr. M.A. Jinnah was glad at this turn of the event. He was determined to celebrate December 22nd as a Day of Deliverance and 'thanks-giving' as a mark of relief that the Congress Government had at last ceased to function. Jinnah made his appeal on December 2, 1939 in this way :

'I hope that the provincial, district and primary Muslim Leagues all over India will hold public meetings and pass the resolution with such modifications as they may be advised, and after Juma prayers offer prayers by way of thanks giving for being delivered from the unjust Congress regime.'<sup>10</sup>

Against all suggestions, Jinnah celebrated December 22nd as a day of deliverance.<sup>11</sup>

When the Congress resigned provincial office, the Viceroy leaned more on the support of the league.

Now the country passed through constitutional deadlock. The Congress was bent upon independence, but the British Government was not ready for independence. The All India Congress Committee passed a resolution on February 28, 1940. The resolution ran in this way :

"The Congress hereby declares again that nothing short of complete independence can be accepted by the people of India. Indian freedom cannot exist within the orbit of imperialism and dominion status... is wholly inapplicable to India."

**Notes**

1. As quoted in R.C. Majumdar's book, 'Freedom Movement', p. 59.
2. Brecher Michael, Nehru, p. 229.
3. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru I, p. 483.
4. As quoted in R.C. Majumdar's book, "Freedom Movement", (Vol. III), p. 561.
5. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru I p. 485.
6. Keith, A.B., A Constitutional History of India, p. 485.
7. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru I, p. 641
8. Ibid., p. 660.
9. Ibid., p. 664.
10. The Indian Annual Register, 1939, Vol. II, p. 46.
11. Ibid., p. 51.

### THREE

## CAUSE OF FAILURE OF RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT—1935

The general reason for the breakdown of the provincial administration and the failure of the provincial autonomy are many. Congress when it assumed office in eight out of 11 provinces might had made many mistakes. In the peculiar circumstances of India where the possibility of alternative government did not exist, pure majority rule in the provinces was perhaps a tactical mistake. Congress was dominated by extra-provincial consideration and adopted policies at the dictation of the Congress High Command. Congress might also have petty quarrel with the provincial Governors as in the U.P. and Bihar over the release of the political prisoners and might have after all entered office with the main purpose of bringing pressure to bear upon the British Government for radical change of the Constitutional structure through a popularly elected Constituent Assembly but these were not the real reason for the breakdown of the Constitution and the more obvious reasons were to be found in the Act of 1935 itself.

Responsible Government like Federation succeeds in that country where it has a spontaneous growth developing through traditions and usages and not imposed from without. It is not an Act of parliament which imposes responsible Government upon a province of a state once and for all. In India, on the contrary both Federation at the Centre and responsible Government in the provinces were imposed by an Act of the alien parliament. The Federation failed to take a concrete shape and provincial autonomy also proved to be a myth.

Responsible Government failed to develop within the rigid frame work of a parliamentary statute. No mention was made in the Act of 1935 of a provincial Cabinet of Prime Minister.

A homogeneous group of Ministers called the Cabinet had been ruled out by the Act itself, because provincial Governors had been empowered to look to the interests of the minorities at the time of formation of the Ministry. In the absence of a homogeneous Cabinet, there could not be Prime Minister in the real sense of the term. Hence Chief Ministers were appointed in all provinces. In place of collective responsibility, individual responsibility of Ministers was encouraged. Governor presided over the meeting of the Council of Ministers and thus Governors brought themselves down to the level of party politics. In the Self-Governing Dominion on the other hand, Governors had kept themselves above party politics and had truly represented the Crown. Responsible Government had developed there not within the four corners of a parliamentary statute but beyond them through the silent growth of conventions, helped by the Governors themselves, who had mostly liberally interpreted the instrument of instructions. The history of one and half years contest between the Ministries and Governors proved where the evil lay.

The Governor, was the pivot of the entire provincial administration under the Act of 1935. He had wide and undefined powers and responsibility. Not only was the Governor, the part of the law-making machinery alone, he was by himself "an alternative legislature all complete." He was therefore

the key-arch of the steel frame, serving as the faithful agent of British imperialism and stood for all its interests and against all that goes against it. The Governor was responsible to the Secretary of State and ultimately to parliament. If provincial Ministries pulled one way the Governors pulled the other way and instead of the growth of the provincial autonomy there was constant increasing interference of external forces and of the imperial government in every branch of provincial administration. The Instrument of Instruction was approved of by Parliament making it difficult for Governors to give it that elasticity without which responsible government could not develop.

Beside the rigidity of the Instrument of the Instruction of the Governor, under the new Act he had several special responsibilities, for which he was required to act in his own discretion. Some of them were as follows :—(1) To preside at the meeting of the Council of Minister; (2) To decide, if in any matter he was to act in his discretion and in his individual judgement (3) To prevent crimes intended to overthrow the Government established by law; (4) To prevent the disclosure of sources of information regarding certain crimes of violence; (5) To address and send message to the legislature; (6) To refuse to assent to bills, to reserve them for the consideration of the Governor-General or to return them for reconsideration of the legislature; (7) to stay proceeding in the legislature if a bill was dangerous to peace and tranquility; (8) To promulgate Ordinances and (9) To enact Acts for the discharge of the Governor-General. In exercise of these special responsibilities a Governor's action could not be questioned in a court of law.

The special responsibilities together with the Instrument of Instruction effected provincial administration to such an extent that freedom of action on the part of Ministers became a myth. They penetrated every branch of provincial administration, legislation became not an act of the Ministry, but an act of the Governor. Every bill had to obtain his previous sanction and for these purposes he was to appoint an advocate-General who

would have no political affiliation with the Ministry and would hold office during the pleasure of the Governor.

Beside issuing ordinances, a Governor without consulting the Ministry or the Legislature could issue what were called Governor's act. To quote the words of Sir John Anderson "Under the new act the Governor as the representative of the Sovereign becomes for the first time himself a part of the legislature, a new legislative partnership is established." Although under the new Act law and order came into the Ministerial hand, the Governor's authority over the police was supreme and any rule or amendment effecting the police was to be left to his individual judgement. No member of his police force could divulge to the Ministry the source of information of any violent crime. The Criminal Intelligence Department was therefore the outside of jurisdiction of popular Ministers. The Inspector-General of police and the Commissioner of police had direct access to Governors. This provisions might have been dictated by the wave of terrorism which was now rampant in Bengal but the statutory restriction imposed on the Ministry in the matter of law and order was a negation of real responsibility.

The Act of 1935 also provided like that of 1919 that both Ministers and their permanent Secretaries, who were members of the I.C.S. should have direct access to the Governors and in many cases decision on important departmental matters were reached between the Governor and the Secretary prior to any consultation with the Ministers, thus, lowering the prestige of the Ministry. Thus these special responsibilities prevented the growth of real responsible Government.

In fact the Provincial Governors had more powers in regard to the legislature than His Majesty had in England. There is no provision in the English Constitution corresponding to section 93 of the Government of India Act. They can carry on their administration, without the Legislature and Cabinet. As Prof. Keith observes : "The special powers are intended solely to meet the cases of unconstitutional action. Constitutionally Ministers are bound to preserve tranquility not to

neglect or oppress minority, not to ill treat the civil service, not to corrupt the administration of justice and not to injure the interest of state. It was the blunder of the India Office that the Governor persisted in interfering in the Constitutional activity of Ministers and they reduced Ministerial responsibility a farce.<sup>1</sup>

"If the Governor of the provinces were seriously to act on their special responsibilities, it is certain that responsible Government would never emerge."<sup>2</sup>

"It is not surprising that neither gratitude nor co-operation is readily forthcoming for a hybrid product such as is the provincial system of special responsibilities and acts to be done according to individual judgement."<sup>3</sup>

The Special legislative and Executive powers of the Governor-General also imposed severe restriction on provincial autonomy. In the matter of ordinances for example, the scope of the Act of 1935 came to be wider than that of 1919. Under the earlier Act ordinances could be issued only by the Governor-General. Under the Act of 1935 they could be issued by the Provincial Governors as well but in exercising this power, the Provincial Governors were directly responsible to the Governor-General. So the ordinance making power of the Governor-General extended to all the Provinces. On the outbreak of war in 1939, the Governor-General issued a Proclamation of Emergency—a Defence of India Ordinance was issued which was later converted into Defence of India Act, 1939. By it the Central Executive was armed with the new legislative power to invade provincial autonomy. The Defence of India Rules which were framed under the Defence of India Act made serious encroachment on provincial autonomy. The Governor-General might direct any provincial Governor as his agent in the provinces in respect of Defence, Foreign affairs, Ecclesiastical Affairs and Tribal Areas. Provincial executive authority was to be so used as not to interfere in the federal authority and federal authority extended to giving directions to a Province to ensure that end. This was a very striking derogation from provincial autonomy. If a province failed to

carry out federal directions, a means of compulsions was also provided for. The Governor-General might issue instructions to the Governor who to exercise his special responsibility must then give effect to his orders even against the Minister's wishes. The Governor-General had also unfettered discretion to give provincial Governor any order in regard to the maintenance of peace and tranquility, a power which might be so exercised as to have far reaching effect on provincial autonomy.

The Financial settlement under the Act of 1935 considerably hindered the growth of Provincial Autonomy. Finance remained a central subject. The Award of Sir Otto Niemeyer emphasized this financial centralisation. The new settlement however, devised a scheme of distribution of revenues among the provinces according to needs. It was realised no doubt that under the Act of 1935 if provincial Autonomy was to function the provinces should be in possession of adequate revenues and so one of the recommendations of the Niemeyer Award was that the provinces should obtain from the Central Government 50 per cent of the proceeds of the income tax from the provincial sources. This was at the beginning a good enough idea but the idea was marred in the execution. It was laid down for example that this allocation to the provinces of 50 per cent of the proceeds of the income tax might be withheld by the Centre during the first five years and it was further laid down that this arrangement might be continued even afterwards. In actual fact this amount of income tax revenue was withheld. So at the very moment, when the Provincial Autonomy was to function and the provinces consequently were in need of large and expanding revenues, the Central Government stood in the way, withheld the income tax proceeds from the provinces. Thus the financial distribution destroyed the prospect of Provincial Autonomy.

#### Notes

1. Keith, A.B., *A Constitutional History of India*, p. 473.
2. *ibid.*, p. 473.
3. *ibid.*, p. 474

## FOUR

### CONSTITUTIONAL SCHEME AFTER 1939

The outbreak of war suspended the Federation and practically laid bound up 1935 type of Constitution but the question of a Central Government became even more important after India's participation in the war than before. It became necessary for the British Government to associate Indians with an active prosecution of war and for that reason bring the provinces together under some Central organisation which might have the backing of major political parties.

The first proposal coming from the Government was no advance upon the Act of 1935 or any change of a Constitutional nature but simply an expansion of Governor-General's Executive Council within the frame work of the Act of 1935 and for the duration of the war only by the inclusion of representatives of important political groups. Britain's expansion of the Executive Council in India on July 22, 1940 to twelve members of whom eight were Indians failed to satisfy Congress leaders, who continued to have but a single major aim : Complete

Independence.<sup>1</sup> Congress rejected this scheme because it made no Constitutional change and was just a scheme for associating a few prominent non-officials with the existing Executive Councillors under the control of Governor-General for the prosecution of a war which had been declared without the consent of Indian people. Moreover, the scheme did not say a word about the status of India at the end of the war and about the manner in which a new Constitution was devised. Hence the scheme fell ill.

The war was passing through a difficult phase. The Russo-Finnish war ended on March 12, 1940. Within a month German troops had occupied Denmark and attacked Norway. In view of the continuing deadlock between Congress and Britain, Gandhi, who took command of Congress affairs during early 1940 continued to favour the launching of a civil disobedience campaign. Because of Britain's extra-ordinarily courageous stand against the threat of invasion, Nehru's resistance to Gandhi's attitude increased considerably. A number of other Congress leaders similarly opposed Gandhi's stand, especially at the time of the fall of France.

During the summer of 1940, the Congress Working Committee met in emergency session, announcing its readiness to co-operate in the war effort, if Britain would grant complete independence to India.<sup>2</sup> Like Nehru, the Working Committee came to the conclusion that it was legitimate to wage a non-violent struggle for the country's internal freedom, but not for national defence. A more conciliatory proposal had been offered to the British previously by C. Rajagopalachari.<sup>3</sup> This proposal was the acknowledgement of India's independence by Britain and the immediate formation at the Centre of a provisional national Government, which would be responsible to the present Central Assembly. If this were done, this Government would take charge of defence and thus help in the war effort. This proposal was definitely a moderate one. But the Viceroy gave reply on behalf of the British Government and rejected the Congress proposal. The alternative proposal that he put forward was identical with what he had suggested nine

months before. The Viceroy made it further clear that no major change would take place in the country ever after the war unless this was approved of by various groups in India.

*August offer*

Another offer was made by the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow on August 8, 1940. It is known as the August Offer.

By this offer the Governor-General contemplated expansion of his Executive Council to include a certain number of representatives of the political parties. The British Government authorised him further to establish a War Advisory Council, which would have met at regular intervals and which would have contained representatives of the Indian States and other interests in the national life of India as a whole. The second point of general interest was the machinery for building within the British Commonwealth of Nations the new Constitutional scheme. His Majesty's Government authorised the Governor-General to declare that they would most readily assent to the setting up after the conclusion of the war, with the least possible delay, of a body representatives of principal elements in India's national life in order to devise the framework of the new Constitution. The Governor-General mentioned in the last portion of the offer that they hoped that in this process new bonds of union and understanding would emerge and thus would pave the way towards the attainment by India of that free and equal partnership in the British Commonwealth which remained the proclaimed and accepted goal of the Imperial Crown and of the British Parliament.<sup>4</sup>

This was undoubtedly a more concrete offer but the future Constitution was still left vague and even the arrangement during the war did not mean any Constitutional advance. There was no idea of a national Government at the Centre acting as a responsible Cabinet. There was merely an administrative device to tide India over the war.

Congress reaction to the 'August Offer' was summed up in Nehru's remark that the conception of Dominion status for India was as dead as a doornail. The Congress working

Committee passed the following resolution on August 22, 1940 in reply to the Viceroy's statement of August 8 and Mr. Amery's (the Secretary of State for India) statement in Parliament:<sup>5</sup> "The Working Committee are of the opinion that the assertion contained in the statements made on behalf of the British Government that they will not part with power and responsibility in favour of the elected representatives of the people of India and that, therefore, the present autocratic and irresponsible system of Government must continue, so long as any group of people or the princes, as distinguished from the people of the States, or perhaps even foreign vested interests raise objections to any Constitution framed by the elected representatives of the people of India, is a direct encouragement and incitement to civil discord and strife and amounts to a fatal blow to all willingness to compromise and adjustment of claims.<sup>6</sup> The Working in the end called upon the people to condemn the attitude adopted by the British Government by means of public meetings and otherwise, as also through their elected representatives in the provincial Legislature.

This August offer shared the fate of earlier scheme but the danger to India deepened. The Governor-General thought it advisable to expand his Council and create additional departments. Some prominent individuals were appointed. A national Defence Council was set up to co-ordinate the activity of the Central Government, the British Indian provinces and the Indian states for a successful prosecution of the war.

The Indian National Congress and the Muslim League had so far been consulted by the Government of India. Both had rejected the scheme of British Government to associate Indians with the war, unless the assurance was given that the Act of 1935 would be replaced by one devised by Indians themselves. The other element now organised themselves and held a non-party's Conference. The liberal also met and devised a scheme of Government known as Sapru Plan. The suggestion coming from all quarters was for the real national Government at the Centre functioning as a true Cabinet and developing conventions which might in time transform the India's Executive Council into a Cabinet of Dominion variety, so that there

might be Dominion Status in action. But this scheme was not accepted by the British Government. Mr. Jinnah stigmatised it as a "Hindu-Plan" and as the British Government was pledged to safeguard the minorities nothing came out of it.

### Notes

1. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru II, p. 32.
2. *ibid.*, p. 21.
3. A leading member of Congress, Governor-General of Independent India before Republic Day, 1950.
4. *ibid.*, Nehru II, p. 36.
5. The Indian Annual Register, 1940, II, p. 17.
6. *ibid.*, p. 39.

## FIVE

### INDIVIDUAL CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE MOVEMENT

In view of Congress rejection of the Viceroy's August proposal, the All-India Congress Committee passed a resolution, in pursuance of which Gandhi assumed leadership. The Resolution ran in this way : "The All-India Congress Committee sympathises with the British people as well as the peoples of all other countries involved in the war. Congressmen cannot withhold their admiration for the bravery and endurance shown by the British nation in the face of danger and peril. They can have no ill-will against them, and the spirit of 'Satyagraha' forbids the Congress from doing anything with a view to embarrass them. But this self-imposed restraint cannot be taken to the extent of self-extinction. The Congress must insist on the fullest freedom to pursue its policy, based on non-violence. The Congress has, however, no desire at the present moment to extend non-violent resistance, should this become necessary, beyond what is required for the preservation of the liberties of the people."<sup>1</sup>

Mahatma Gandhi sought an interview with the Viceroy, and met him on September 27.<sup>2</sup> The Viceroy rejected the Congress demand for unlimited freedom of speech on the grounds that the war effort would be seriously impaired. Gandhi decided that there was no alternative save to launch a civil disobedience campaign.

Now Gandhi decided to launch an individual civil dis-obedience movement. His primary objectives were to symbolize the Congress protest against 'Participation without consultation' and to establish the right of free speech, even in time of war, but not to embarrass the war effort as such. It was a strange campaign indeed. Selected individuals were to recite in public a set formula of an anti-war slogan : 'It is wrong to help the British war effort with men or money. The only worthy effort is to resist all war with non-violent resistance'. No other action was prescribed.

On October 17, 1940, the day on which individual Satyagraha or civil dis-obedience, was initiated. Vinoba Bhave—a devoted disciple of Gandhi, later to become leader of India's Bhoodan, or land-grant movement—was chosen to be the first satyagrahi by Gandhi. He delivered an anti-war speech on October 17. Nehru, who was to be the second to offer satyagraha on November 7, was arrested on October 31, for three speeches he had made in the district of Gorakhpur on October 6 and 7.<sup>3</sup>

Gandhi's original intention was to fast after the arrest of the third Satyagrahi, the completely unknown Brahmo Dutt, but he was dissuaded by his colleagues. Gandhi informed the Viceroy early in November 1940 of his new plan of action : this was to extend civil dis-obedience to individuals from three groups in the provinces. About 700 persons offered satyagraha.

While the movement was in full swing, Gandhi proclaimed a truce in X'mas holiday. The next phase began on 5th January, 1941. List of satyagrahis were prepared by local Congress committee and about 2250 were convicted by the end of the month. Then in April 'four anna' members of the Congress

were enrolled. Immediately there was a sharp rise in the number of satyagrahis. More than 20,000 were convicted.

It was a futile campaign. Even Congressmen considered this useless. They all appealed to Gandhi to call off the movement. But Gandhi would never withdraw it nor convert it into a mass movement as a large section desired, for he feared that the mass action during the war would embarrass the Government.

On December 3, 1941, the Government of India issued a communique expressing confidence that all responsible opinion in India would support the war effort until victory was secured; that those civil disobedience prisoners—roughly six or seven thousand in number, whose offences had been formal or symbolic in character, could be set free, including Nehru. Now it was believed that the military danger had somewhat abated. Mr. Brecher has made a sharp comment on this movement in this way :

“On the whole civil disobedience in 1940-41 was a tame affair with little public enthusiasm compared with the campaigns of 1930 and 1942.”<sup>4</sup>

### Atlantic Charter

The war had taken a difficult turn and Hitler had been fighting against Soviet Russia.

Many democratic nations had suffered defeat. The U.S.A. to help world democratic powers passed a lend-lease bill empowering President Roosevelt to give “all-out” aid to Britain, or any other countries opposing the axis.

The Atlantic Charter, promulgated by U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, was made public on August 14, 1941. Among its provisions were the following clauses : that the U.S. and Britain “(1) seek no aggrandizement, territorial or other; (2) desire to see no territorial changes that do not accord with the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned; (3) respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of Government

under which they will like ; and wish to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived on them.<sup>5</sup> All together there were eight clauses.

Immediately after the signing of the charter, a member of Parliament asked this question to Mr. Churchill 'Mr. Prime Minister, does Article III of the Atlantic Charter which grants all countries the right to choose their own form of Government, apply to India? Churchill rose and said, 'No, Sir.' Churchill excluded India and Burma in his address to the House of Commons. According to President Roosevelt, the Atlantic Charter could be applied to the whole world.

"Prime Minister Churchill, in his House of Commons statement of September 9, 1941 asserted that the Atlantic Charter.... did not qualify in any way various statements of policy which had been made from time to time about the development of Constitutional government in India, notably the declaration of August 1940 and that he and President Roosevelt had primarily in mind the restoration of sovereignty to the peoples of Europe under the Nazi Yoke."<sup>6</sup>

Churchill did a disservice to Indo-British relations by this unfortunate statement. As Coupland said it was difficult to exaggerate the disquieting effect of the statement on the Indian mind. Moderate Indians were shaken in their faith. A great friend of Britain, Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan, Premier of Punjab called the statement of Churchill 'the biggest rebuff India has ever received'. He told further : 'This was the most opportune time for all the parties in the country to unite, if the British were not prepared to make an unambiguous declaration which should clear the confusion created in Indian mind. Mr. Amery's reply added, the Premier, had made confusion worse confounded.'

Mr. Churchill's interpretation of the Atlantic Charter with reference to India was condemned by the All India Nationalist league which concluded its session in New Delhi under the Presidentship of Mr. Jammadas Mehta. The League characterised the interpretation as "nothing short of repudiation of the plighted word of his Majesty's Government. The League

appealed to President Roosevelt and the British Government to make a further declaration reiterating the promise of complete freedom to India.<sup>8</sup>

The U.S.A. Government was quite concerned over the matter. Mr. Winant, the American Ambassador to London was, however, in complete agreement with Mr. Berle, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State. 'A friendly India' he told the President 'could be valuable ally in the war' and restrain Japan from participation on the Nazi side.<sup>9</sup> Ambassador Winant tried to persuade the Prime Minister to eliminate the paragraph in question from his speech but Churchill did not do this.

To sum up, the Atlantic Charter caused deep annoyance and frustration among Indian minds.

### Notes

1. *ibid.*, pp. 40-41.
2. *The Annual Indian Register*, 1949 II, pp. 30-31.
3. *ibid.*, p. 43.
4. Brecher, Michael, Nehru, p. 274.
5. *The Indian Annual Register*, Vol. II, 1941, p. 82.
6. *ibid.*, p. 54.
7. *The Indian Annual Register*, 1941, II, p. 24.
8. *ibid.*, p. 30.
9. Norman, Dorothy Nehru II, p. 55

## NINETEEN FORTY TWO

Sir R. Lumby, the Governor of Bombay sent a report to Linlithgow, the Governor-General of the country on January 1, 1942. The report contained his impressions of the impact of the Second World War in the East and the Japanese advances in the South East Asia upon Indian public opinion and his assessment of the attitude of Indian political leaders. Sir Tej Bahadur, who had prescribed at the Non-party leaders conference in March and July 1941 sent a cable to the British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill. The Cable contained an appeal of a distinguished group of Indian liberals in the face of so grave an international situation for some bold stroke of far-sighted statemanship in order to enlist India's whole-hearted active co-operation in the war effort. The main part of the cable ran in this way : 'Is it not possible for you to declare at this juncture that India no longer be treated as dependency to be ruled from Whitehall and henceforth her constitutional position and powers identical with those other units, British Commonwealth ? Such declaration should we suggest be accompanied

concrete measures calculated to impress people that in co-operating war effort they are safeguarding their own freedom."<sup>1</sup> The two themes the Japanese threat to India and the British reaction to Sapru's cable dominated the period. But while the themes were constant the situation, both militarily and politically was in process of rapid change.

On January 16, 1942, the All India Congress Committee repeated its offer of conditional co-operation in the war effort. As in the past, there were divergent views within the Committee about the manner in which co-operation might take place. Although Nehru and Gandhi continued to disagree about the course of action to be taken, there was to be no real break between them.

Mr. Churchill was in Washington from December 22, 1941 to January 14, 1942. Churchill expressed the hope that 'his colleagues would realise the danger of raising constitutional issue, still more of making constitutional changes in India at a moment when enemy was upon the frontier. But discussions proceeded between members of the Cabinet, the Secretary of State for India and the Viceroy, nominally on the particular issue of the reply to be given to Sapru but in fact upon the desirability and nature of a fresh British initiative. Linlithgow was not in favour of change and he sent a message to the Prime Minister on 21 January 1942 : "I shall not have an easy hand to play here if we stand firm, but I think I can hold the position well enough. Vital thing is that people should stand firm at home." On 24 January the Lord Privy Seal, C.R. Attlee in a manuscript letter to L.S. Amery, the Secretary of State, expressed misgivings about the Viceroy's judgment. On February 1, the Secretary of State submitted a memorandum to the Cabinet on the specific questions of the reply to be sent to Sapru. On 2 February Attlee restated and amplified his earlier views favouring the entrusting of 'some person of high standing either already in India or sent out from here with wide powers to negotiate a settlement in India.'<sup>2</sup>

In the midst of political upheavals Generalissimo and Madame Chiang Kai-shek paid a visit to India to seek with

the Indians a more effective united efforts against the aggression of Japan and reached Calcutta on February 5, 1942. There he received Churchill's personal message. Chiang had expressed his desire before his coming to India to Churchill that he wanted to see Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. Churchill had sent a reply through a personal message. The message ran in this way : "With regard to your seeing persons like Mr. Gandhi and Mr. Nehru, who are in a state at least of passive disobedience to the King Emperor, this you will readily see is a matter which requires very grave consideration. It might make a most grievous impression in Great Britain and throughout the British Empire if anything of this kind occurred. In any case, if you began seeing in leaders of the Indian Congress party, it would be necessary that you should also see Mr. Jinnah representing 80,000,000 Moslems and representatives of the 40,000,000 depressed classes and of the Indian princes who rule over 80,000,000."<sup>3</sup> Generalissimo reached Delhi on February 11. Chiang Kai-shek was not permitted by the British Government to see Mahatma Gandhi at Wardah. He left Delhi on February 16 for China. He met Gandhi on February 17 at Santiniketan and departed for China on February 21, 1942. He advised British Government in parting message to give real political power and freedom to India.<sup>4</sup> Jinnah did not like this statement.

Linlithgow tried to find out an answer to the Indian constitutional deadlock. He sent a telegram to Amery on 27th February in this way : 'British Government should make declaration in the following terms : (1) That it is proposed to raise India to a status of Dominion within 3 years from the date of peace; (2) That the elements in national life of India shall produce agreed solution of constitutional differences within one year of signing of Armistic. (3) That failing agreement British Government will submit dispute to International Tribunal for decision and (4) That when such decision is given British Government shall undertake to give effect to it as part of Dominion constitution for India.'<sup>5</sup>

At least the British Government prepared a New Draft Declaration, regarding the future government of India. His

Majesty's Government therefore, made the following declaration :

- (a) Immediately upon the cessation of hostilities, steps shall be taken to set-up in India, in the manner prescribed hereafter, an elected body charged with the task of framing a new Constitution for India.
- (b) Provision shall be made, as set out below, for the participation of the Indian States in the Constitution-making body.
- (c) His Majesty's Government undertake to accept and implement forthwith the constitution so framed subject only to:
  - (i) the right of any province of British India that is not prepared to accept the new Constitution to retain for the time being its present constitutional position, provision being made for subsequent accession.
  - (ii) The signing of a treaty which shall be negotiated between His Majesty's Government and the constitution-making body.
- (d) The Constitution-making body shall be composed as follows, unless the leaders of Indian opinion in the principal communities agree upon some other form before the end of hostilities :
- (e) While during the critical period which now faces India, and until the new Constitution can be framed, His Majesty's Government must inevitably bear the full responsibility for India's defence.<sup>6</sup>

Churchill sent a telegram to Roosevelt on March 4, 1942. The following had been paraphrase of messages and the summary referred to in the telegram : 'The Sapru Conference of a few individuals with no following and acting as exploring and patrol agents for the Congress have put forward plausible subtle and consequently more treacherous proposals. If the British Government is stampeded into the trap laid for them Moslem India would be sacrificed with most disastrous consequences, especially in regard to the war effort. Any peace

with Congress agitators will only be made at very heavy cost. They do not wish to give frank undertaking that they will assist in war effort if restored to office. They wish to use Sapru and others to secure for them offices and Governments which they will not themselves ask for because they do not intend to act straightforwardly and whole-heartedly.<sup>7</sup>

At last the British Government decided to send Sir S. Cripps to India. Amery sent a telegram to Linlithgow on March 10, 1942. The telegram ran as follows : 'Decision to send out Cripps taken over week-end has superseded publication for the time being and consequently also consideration of your alternative draft for publication. Cripps will naturally have this alternative with him as material for consideration, but Cabinet definitely want him to treat their draft as the basis of his instruction. If he fails to secure agreement then presumably no declaration will issue. If he succeeds the dangers anticipated by you and others will not materialise.'<sup>8</sup> Roosevelt was very much interested in the Indian freedom movement. So he sent a telegram from Washington to Churchill on March 11, 1942: It is merely a thought of mine to suggest the setting up of what might be called a temporary government in India, headed by a small representative group, covering different castes, occupations, religious and geographies—the group to be recognised as a temporary dominion government. It would, of course, represent existing governments of the British Provinces and would also represent the council of Princes, but my principal thought is that it would be charged with setting up a body to consider a more permanent government for the whole country—This consideration to be extended over a period of five or six years or at least until the end of the war.'

Japan had posed a difficult problem to Britain. The turning-point came on 8th March 1942, when Rangoon was occupied by the Japanese. According to Churchill's war memoirs, it was in the face of this imminent threat that London responded to the Congress offer. Until that time the danger to its Indian Empire had been remote and so the British Government had been indifferent to the attitude of Indian nationalists. Now the

Japanese were at the gates, and pressure was being exerted by Chiang-Kai-shek and Roosevelt, as mentioned already.

Before Roosevelt's telegram, on 9 March the British Cabinet accepted the offer of Sir Stafford Cripps, who had replaced Attlee as Lord Privy Seal, to negotiate on the basis of the draft Declaration in India, while the Viceroy, on the same day, announced and explained his decision to resign should the Declaration be made in the form then before the Cabinet Committee. On 10 March Churchill explained the considerations which had prompted the Cripps Mission and urged the Viceroy not to resign. On March 11, Churchill announced in the House of Commons that Cripps was being dispatched to Delhi with new proposals in an effort to break the deadlock.<sup>9</sup>

Amery sent a telegram to Linlithgow on March 12, 1942 indicating the provisional outline of Cripps' plans. He was informed of Cripps' two-fold mission in relation (1) to immediate problem of securing full Indian co-operation in war effort, and (2) to long-term policy which is necessary background to (1). He was further told that Cripps would consult with him and as to latter he had as the framework within which to conduct discussions with political leaders, the draft declaration.<sup>10</sup>

Churchill's statement brought immediate reactions among political leaders in the country. Nehru declined to make any comment. Maulana Azad said that he would welcome him as a friend. Rajagopalchari expressed pleasure that British Government had at last realised gravity of the situation and selected a good Ambassador. Sapru said "On the whole I welcome Cripps' forthcoming visit and would not like to say a word which might prejudice his great mission." Jinnah commented "I cannot possibly give any opinion anticipating decision of Moslem League Working Committee, meeting of which is being called as soon as possible to consider situation and announcement." Mahatma Gandhi also declined to make any comment. Patel made an apt remark "Cripps is coming at a time when the sands are running out fast and it might be almost impossible for the British to give us anything or for us to take anything."<sup>11</sup> The Viceroy under the instruction of the Prime Minister convey-

ed to Sapru a Message from him that the statement made in Parliament and the mission to Sir Stafford Cripps to India were in effect the answer to Sapru's telegram of 2nd January, 1942. Cripps sent a telegram to Linlithgow about his programme.

Churchill sent a telegram to Mackenzie King, on March 18, 1942 about the task of Cripps Mission. The telegram began in this way: "Congress have hitherto definitely refused Dominion Status. Muslims, a hundred millions, declare that they will insist upon Pakistan a sort of Ulster in the North. We have our treaties which must be respected with princes in India, over ninety millions. There are forty million Hindu untouchables to whom we have obligations. These are the grim issues which Cripps is valiantly trying to settle. I should strongly recommend your awaiting developments till we see how the Cripps Mission goes."<sup>12</sup>

Before Cripps's arrival to India Colonel Louis Johnson was appointed as the American President's personal Representatives on March 19, 1942.

### Cripps Mission

Sir Stafford Cripps reached Delhi at midday on March 23, 1942. He met the Executive Council on the same day at 3.30 p.m. He made a statement and explained the decision of H.M.G. to have their plan presented by a Cabinet Minister rather than published forthwith, as so much depended on presentation. He held a press conference on March 23, 1942 at Delhi. He made a statement in this way: "I have come to India to discuss with the leaders of Indian opinion conclusions which the war Cabinet have unitedly reached in regard to India. I am here to ascertain whether these conclusions will as we hope be generally acceptable to Indian opinion. Obviously it would not be appropriate for me to say anything further about the precise nature of the proposals at this stage beyond the indications which were given by the Prime Minister in the House of Commons. Their Chief object is to set out finally and with precision the practical steps which His Majesty's

Government propose as the method of fulfilling their past promises of self government to the Indian peoples....There is no time to lose and no time for long discussion. I am sure that in the circumstances of today the leaders of the main parties and interests in India will be ready to take quick decision."<sup>13</sup> The Indian National Congress; the Muslim League, the Chamber of Princes and the Hindu Mahasabha were asked to nominate their own representatives to hold discussions with Cripps and representatives of the Sikhs, the Liberal Party and the Scheduled Castes were also invited to meet him.

Cripps started conferring with the leader of the different political parties. He held an interview with Maulana Azad, Asaf Ali and Jinnah on March 25, 1942, with the Jam Saheb and the Maharaja of Bikaner, Joshi, the trade union Congress leader and Sir Henery Gidney, the leader of the Anglo-Indian.

Community on March 26. The process of interview was continued. He interviewed Baldeo Singh, Ujjal Singh, Master Tara Singh and Yogendra Singh, a number of Europeans and Mahatma Gandhi on March 27. After reading the document, Gandhi said that Congress would not accept the document. He started by asserting that the document was an invitation to the Muslims to create a Pakistan. The third round of interview took place on March 28. He interviewed Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, C. Rajagopalachari, a delegation of the Chamber of Princes and Jinnah on March 28. He also interviewed a delegation of the Hindu Mahasabha, the Hyderabad delegation, the Congress President and Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan on March 28. Jinnah asked a few further questions and elucidation. It was quite clear to Cripps from his whole attitude that the Working Committee of the League had already accepted the scheme in principle and were prepared to proceed to settle the details especially those under clause (e).<sup>14</sup> Before His Majesty's Government's proposals were released for publication, Cripps had an interview with Jawaharlal Nehru and Azad on March 29. He kept a note of Nehru's talk. The note was recorded in this way : 'The general attitude of Nehru,

who was tired and not well, was mild and conciliatory and, he left me in complete doubt as to whether Congress was more or less decided not to accept it and that it was not worth arguing or pressing for any alteration or whether he was not inclined to press his particular objections in view of the general character of the scheme and its grant of free self-government in India. The proposals were released for publication on March 30. Before it was released for publication, Cripps had an interview with Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr. Ambedkar, Fazlul Huq and Dr. S.P. Mukherjee. Nehru told him of the difficulties in the Congress Working Committee and conveyed him the impression that they would not accept the proposals.

The Draft declaration was published in the country on March 30, 1942. It was stated :

- (a) Immediately upon the cessation of hostilities, steps shall be taken to set up in India, in the manner described hereafter, an elected body charged with task of framing a new Constitution for India.
- (b) Provision shall be made, as set out below, for the participation of the Indian States in the Constitution-making body.
- (c) His Majesty's Government undertake to accept and implement forthwith the Constitution so framed subject only to :
  - (i) the right of any province of British India that is not prepared to accept the new Constitution to retain its present constitutional position, provision being made for its subsequent accession if it so decides.

With such non-acceding provinces, should they so desire, His Majesty's Government will be prepared to agree upon a new Constitution, giving them the same full status as Indian Union, and arrived at by a Procedure analogous to that laid down.

- (ii) The signing of a Treaty which shall be negotiated between His Majesty's Government and the Constitution-making body.
- (d) The Constitution-making body shall be composed as follows, unless the leaders of Indian opinion in the principal communities agree upon some other form before the end of hostilities.

Immediately upon the result being known of the provincial elections which will be necessary at the end of hostilities, the entire membership of the Lower Houses of the Provincial Legislatures shall, as a single electoral College, proceed to the election of the Constitution-making body by the system of proportional representation. This new body shall be in number about one-tenth of the number of the electoral college.

- (e) During the critical period which now faces India and until the new Constitution can be framed His Majesty's Government must inevitably bear the responsibility for and retain control and direction of the defence of India as part of their war effort, but the task of organising to the full the military, moral and material resources of India must be the responsibility of the Government of India with the co-operation of the peoples of India.<sup>15</sup>

These proposals had certain obvious flaws which were overlooked at the beginning and for which they failed to commend themselves to Indian public opinion. The Constituent Assembly as it was going to be formed by the existing legislature which in their turn were based on communal electorate. This was not the type of Constituent Assembly demanded by Congress. Congress had suggested a Constituent Assembly elected on the widest democratic franchise equivalent to adult suffrage. The right of accession from the Indian union was a concession to the Muslim demand for Pakistan. A concession like this before the actual establishment of an Indian Union was calculated to vitiate the very scheme of an Indian union and damp the ardour of large section for the Indian Union.

Sir Stafford tried to defend the proposed concession by saying that in this case he was dealing with the psychology of fear among the Muslims and that a definite concession like this would assurably allay the fear and even induce the Muslims in the long run to remain within the Indian Union instead of coming out of it. But as Congress pointed out the concession in its larger aspects was also applicable to the Indian states and if the Indian states remained out of the Indian Union like the Muslim majority provinces, India would be balkanized. Even then notwithstanding these flaws the proposal for the future Constitution of India were found to be acceptable to the major political party, but difficulty occurred with regard to short term proposals and the interim arrangement was found to be wholly unsatisfactory. During the war the scheme was for a complete non-officialisation of the Governor-General's Executive Council but there was no suggestion that this Central Council would act as a homogeneous Cabinet of the Dominion variety responsible to the Indian legislature. In fact the Indian demand had all along been for a real responsible Cabinet at the Centre not in some remote future but the straight way during the war itself, so that India might pull her full weight in the war against the Axis Powers. Not only was this new Central Council going to be an irresponsible Council, this Council besides was to include the Governor-General, and the Commander-in-Chief, who was to act as the war member. Finally it was discovered that in the new scheme of Government, the Governor-General was not going to act as the Constitutional head of the state leaving the task of administration wholly to the Council, but would in any case maintain those special responsibilities and emergency powers as was laid down in the 9th schedule of the Government of India Act 1935.

The Congress and the Muslim League had little enthusiasm for the Cripps proposals. Cripps realised on March 31, that he was finished. He said to the Governor-General that he thought Indian leaders had missed an excellent offer. He sent a telegram to Churchill on April 1, 1942. The telegram was as follows : 'From all appearances it seems certain that

Congress will turn down the proposals. There are a multitude of currents and cross-currents but they are selecting the question of Defence as their main platform for opposition. The Muslim League who are prepared to accept will no doubt if Congress refuse some reason for refusal as will all other sections of opinion. Maulana Azad and Jawaharlal Nehru called on Cripps in the afternoon of April 2 and handed him resolution of Working Committee. He asked them whether this meant that they decisively turned the draft document down and they said it was the considered opinion of the Congress Working Committee. The Committee was dissatisfied with the arrangement regarding Defence. Jinnah wanted a clear picture of the method by which a province should decide whether it will or will not join an Indian Union. Cripps did accordingly. Cripps formed his impressions after his discussion with the Congress leaders that they by concentrating attention on responsibility for defence, were attempting to distract attention from essential feature of the scheme set out in the Declaration. It was clear to the British Cabinet that Defence issue was being strongly pressed by Congress as the principal difficulty in acceptance of His Majesty's Government's declaration. The Muslims League termed the interim arrangements vague. Many Congress leaders found the Cripps offer unacceptable. Both the Congress and the Muslim league finally rejected the Cripps offer but for almost diametrically opposed reasons." The Working Committee balked at the uncertain future surrounding the commitment to self-determination, the novel principle of non-accession for a province, which encouraged separation and the introduction of non-representative elements, namely the Princes, in the Constituent Assembly. The short-run proposals were also criticised because no real change was contemplated. Nehru was especially troubled by the apparent acceptance of Muslim League demand for Pakistan and the danger of widespread fragmentation of the sub-continent.<sup>18</sup>

Congress did not like "the powers to be entrusted to the contemplated provisional national government for the interim period. It insisted upon a Cabinet Government, with the Viceroy voluntarily undertaking not to exercise his veto powers

and it wanted an Indian minister to have an effective share in defence."

Amery sent a cable to Linlithgow on April 3, 1942 in this way : "I have just seen Stafford Cripps' summary of the Congress Working Committee's resolution. It is certainly difficult to imagine a more purely negative document and I am afraid it looks as if Gandhi had once again persuaded them that wrecking is the best policy. I am not sure that these people really want responsibility, and if we offered them the moon they would probable reject it because of the wrinkles on its surface."<sup>17</sup>

The Muslim League also found the Cripps offer unacceptable as it was clear from Press account of open session of All India Muslim League at Allahabad on April 5 and 6th. But the Committee expressed "Gratification that the possibility of Pakistan (was) recognised by implication".

The British Government proposal to arrange for representation of the Government of India in the war Cabinet and the Pacific war Council in London by no means impressed Indian public opinion. After discussion with Cripps and Wavell, where Johnson was also available, a formula was devised on April 9. It was decided : (a) The Defence Department should be placed in charge of a representative Indian member, with the exception of functions to be exercised by the Commander-in-Chief as War Member of the Executive Council (b) A War Department will be constituted which will take over such functions of the Defence Department as are not retained by the Defence Member. But the position of the Governor-General had not been compromised during negotiations in regard to his powers and duties. Mulana Azad sent a note to Cripps on April 10 mentioning that the Congress wanted a Cabinet Government with full power.

Other Indian parties and groups were similarly dissatisfied. The Hindu Mahasabha feared that Cripps offer would lead to partition, the Sikhs that a Muslim majority in the Punjab would opt out of the Indian Union, the untouchables that they would be at the mercy of caste-Hindus.

Cripps sent a telegram to Churchill on April 10 in this way: 'I have tonight received a long letter from Congress president stating that Congress is unable to accept proposals. Rejections on widest grounds and not solely on Defence issue although it indicates that while Congress would agree that Commander-in-Chief should have freedom to control conduct of War and connected activities as Commander-in-Chief and War Member proposed formula left functions of Defence Member unduly restricted. Main ground of rejection is, however, that in view of Congress there should be immediately a National Government and that without constitutional changes there should be "definite assurances in convention which would indicate that the new Government would function as a free Government and the members of which would act as members of a Cabinet in a constitutional government" .... He also wrote in the end that there was no hope of agreement and he would start home on Sunday.'<sup>18</sup>

Cripps sent a letter to Maulana Azad on April 10 mentioning that he was sorry to receive from him his letter of April 10 expressing the rejection by the Congress Working Committee of His Majesty's Government's draft declaration. Churchill sent a telegram to Cripps on April 11. He praised him in this way: 'You have done everything in human power and your tenacity, perseverance and resourcefulness have proved how great was the British desire to reach a settlement. You must not feel unduly discouraged or disappointed by the results. The effect throughout Britain and in the United States has been wholly beneficial. The fact that the break comes on the broadest issues and not on tangled formulas about defence is a great advantage. I am glad you are coming home at once, where a most cordial welcome awaits you.'<sup>19</sup>

Maulana Azad sent a letter to Cripps on April 11, 1942 and he analysed the causes of the failure of the Mission in this way: 'It seems that there has been a progressive deterioration in the British Government's attitude as our negotiations proceeded. What we were told in our very first talk with you is now denied or explained away. You told me then that

there would be a National Government which would function as a Cabinet and that the position of the Viceroy would be analogous to that of the King in England vis-a-vis his Cabinet. .... The whole of this picture which you sketched before us now has been completely shattered by what you told us during our last interview..... We are convinced that if the British Government did not pursue a policy of encouraging disruption, all of us to whatever party or group we belonged would be able to come together and form a common line of action; but unhappily even in this grave hour of peril the British Government is unable to give up its wrecking policy. We are driven to the conclusion that it attaches more importance to holding on to its rule in India as long as it can and promoting discord and disruption here with that end in view, than to an effective defence of India against the aggression and invasion that overhang it.”<sup>20</sup>

In this way the Congress Working Committee rejected the proposals made by the British War Cabinet with regard to India and the elucidation of them by Sir Stafford Cripps. The novel principle of non-accession for a province was also a severe blow to the conception of Indian unity and an apple of discord likely to generate growing trouble in the provinces, and which might lead to further difficulties in the way of the Indian States merging themselves into an Indian Union. In the same way the All-India Muslim League Working Committee did not accept the Draft Declaration and the interim proposals. It decided that the only solution of India's constitutional problem was the partition of India into independent zones.

Sir Stafford informed the press on April 11 “That the British Government offer to India had been withdrawn, as the replies received had resulted in his regretfully advising the Government that there is not such measure of acceptance of their proposals as to justify their making a declaration in the form of the draft.”

After Congress had rejected Britain's offer, Cripps telegraphed to London from India, “I have to night received a long letter from Congress President stating that Congress is unable

to accept proposals....there is clearly no hope of agreement and I shall start home on Sunday."

Sir Stafford Cripps was not too sad at the failure of his mission, as it appears from his telegram. He sent a telegram to his (British) Prime Minister 'My own view is that despite failure the atmosphere has improved quite definitely. Nehru has come out in a fine statement for total war against the Japanese. Jinnah has pledged me unwavering support of the Muslims....we are not depressed, though sad at the result. Now we must get on with the job of defending India.'<sup>21</sup>

Before leaving India, Cripps made a broadcast to the people of India on April 11, 1942 : 'You will have heard that the Draft Declaration which I brought to India on behalf of the War Cabinet and which I explained to you, the last time I spoke over the wireless has been rejected by your leaders. I am sad that this great opportunity of rallying India for her freedom has been missed.'<sup>22</sup>

Colonel Louis Johnson, President Roosevelt's personal envoy in New Delhi tried to avert a break-down of the Cripps Mission, from April 6, 1942. He requested the President to intercede with Churchill, otherwise Cripps Mission was bound to failure. But the failure of the Mission could not be averted and it failed.

After the final breakdown, Johnson informed Washington that he was convinced 'London wanted a refusal (by the Congress). Nehru has been magnificent in his co-operation with me. The President would like him, and on most things they would agree'. In the same message, he observed, 'Cripps, though no fault of his own, has failed'.

Thus the Cripps Mission failed. Gandhi had called the Cripps proposals as a 'cheque on a crashing bank.' Prof. Coupland (Prof. of Colonial History of the Oxford University) has expressed his opinion on this mission in this way, 'As regards both Anglo-Indian and Hindu-Moslem relation the Cripps Mission had opened a new phase of the Indian question.'<sup>23</sup> Mr. V.P. Menon has explained the causes of the failure in this way : 'That there was no proper understanding

between the Viceroy and Sir Stafford Cripps, nor between Sir Stafford Cripps and the British Cabinet. Sir Stafford had been over-confident of 'Selling' at least the interim proposals to the Congress, but in their discussion both had reckoned without the Viceroy and His Majesty's Government. Four years later, in the course of his speech in the House of Commons on 12th December 1946, Churchill made it abundantly clear that His Majesty's Government had not been willing to support Sir Stafford Cripps to the extent to which he himself was prepared to go.<sup>24</sup> Four years later, during the Cabinet Mission talk in Delhi, Cripps told his private Secretary, Woodrow Wyatt, that the Congress had been on the verge of acceptance in 1942, 'Gandhi then rang up the Working Committee from Wardha and recommended rejection'.<sup>25</sup>

There is no doubt perhaps that Gandhi tipped the Congress scales against the Cripps offer. Gandhi could not be only held responsible for its failure. Sir Stafford Cripps, Churchill and Linlithgow were more responsible for the failure of the Mission. Cripps was too much optimistic about his ability to win Congress approval of his short-run proposals. He could not win Gandhi to his view point and he also underestimated Gandhi's crucial role. "Churchill did not extend full support to his envoy; in fact, there was no clear understanding between Cripps and the Viceroy. Lord Linlithgow opposed Cripps efforts to find a compromise defence formula and it was largely at his initiative that Churchill intervened."<sup>26</sup>

Sir Stafford Cripps left for England on April 12. The abrupt end of the negotiations and his sudden departure were the subject of much speculation. The failure of the Cripps Mission was interpreted as a proof of reluctance of great Britain to transfer power and also of the impossibility of solving the communal issue, which appeared to be most conspicuous during the negotiation, so long as a third party remained to play with the contending forces. Hence Congress lost all faith in British sincerity and launched the civil disobedience movement of August 8, 1942.

The main issue during the negotiation with Sir Stafford Cripps had hinged upon the nature of the Central Executive

during the war irrespective of any constitutional scheme after the war. A National Government at the Centre functioning as a Cabinet with joint responsibility to the legislature and without the exercise of Governor-General vetoing power had been the agreed demand of most Indian political parties minus the Muslim League. What was actually offered was expansion of the Executive Council under the existing scheme (that is to say) within the framework of the Act of 1919. It was no constitutional advance but an administrative device to prosecute the war more energetically under the supreme direction of the Governor-General and the Commander-in-Chief. Even this expansion did not work properly and the resignation of three Executive Councillors in 1943 during Mahatma's fast in the Aga Khan Palace amply bears the hollowness of experiment.

### Post Cripps Mission Period

There was profound disappointment in India at the failure of the Cripps Mission. It was felt that the British Government would not grant independence to India even after the war. Mr. Mathews (Special representatives of the 'New York Times') had a conversation with Mahatma Gandhi and Shree Madan Mohan Malaviya. Mahatma Gandhi told that Indians expected Self-Government at the end of the First World War but people got Rowlatt Act, Martial Law and the Amritsar Massacre. So it was in total darkness, Gandhiji told, what kind of Constitutional changes would take place in India after the end of the Second World War. So there was bitterness in the country. There seemed only one way out - the ultimate weapon of civil disobedience. Mahatma Gandhi printed his views in 'Harijan d'ated April 20, 1942. He wrote "It is thousand pities that the British Government should have sent proposals for dissolving the political deadlock which on the face of it was too ridiculous to find acceptance anywhere. And it was misfortune that the bearer should have been Cripps, acclaimed as the radical among radicals and friend of India. He believed no one could have brought anything better for India but he should have known that at least Congress would not look at Dominion Status even though it carried the right of

immediate secession. He knew too that the proposal contemplated the splitting up of India into three parts each having different ideas of governance. It contemplated Pakistan, yet not the Pakistan of the Muslim League's conception. And it gave no real control over defence to responsible ministers.”<sup>27</sup>

The future appeared dark to the Congress, the distrust had grown deeper. This period was a troubled one for Nehru also. He knew that civil disobedience would embarrass the Government war effort. His dilemma increased. Despite his sympathy for the allies, he could not rid himself of a deep distrust of Britain, vis-a-vis India. He stated that although he had no desire “to embarrass the British war effort, the problem for us is how to organize our own”. He issued other statements on May 29, 1942 in this way : ‘I wish to warn the (British) Government that if it pursues its repressive policy....we will resist. We are placed in a dilemma. If we oppose the Government and carry the fight against it, we will invite Japan (into) our country. The Government does not want our real co-operation on honourable terms.’<sup>28</sup>

This period brought differences of outlook among Gandhi, Rajagopalachari and Nehru. Nehru favoured guerrilla warfare against the Japanese during this period. Gandhi commented at this time : “I am sorry that he has developed a fancy for guerrilla warfare. But I have no doubt that it will be nine day,” wonder. It will take no effect. They (Nehru and Rajagopalachari) will return to non-violence with renewed rest, strengthened by the failure of their war-effort.”<sup>29</sup>

Rajagopalachari was convinced that progress was impossible without agreement between the Congress and the League. He managed to get two resolutions passed by the Congress Members in the Madras legislature on April 23, 1942. The first recommended to the All India Congress Committee (which was to meet in Allahabad) that Congressmen should acknowledge the Muslim League's demand for Pakistan and that negotiations should immediately be started with the Muslim League for the ‘Purpose of arriving at an agreement and securing the installation of the national government to meet the present emergency’. The resolution urged that ‘to sacrifice the chances

of the formation of a national government for the doubtful advantage of maintaining a controversy over the unity of India is the most unwise policy<sup>30</sup> and that it had become necessary to chose the lesser evil. Azad did not like the Madras resolution. Dr. Rajendra Prasad described first Madras resolution as premature if not perverse, on April 26, 1942.

The following was the summary of a note entitled 'a Triple Tragedy" published in 'Harijan' of 7th June : 'It is a justification for my friendly invitation to foreign government to abdicate in favour of the nation wherever it may be.' Let British take risk of abdication and it will be their greatest war effort. It alone can save situation, if anything can, so far as India is concerned. As first step let them revoke forfeiture order, discharge Rafi Sahib and return papers seized from AICC.'<sup>31</sup>

Report of a mass movement under Gandhi had frightened the British Government. Amery wrote a letter to Linlithgow on June 16 : 'The view was expressed in the Cabinet that quick and decisive action would be called for once it became clear that Gandhi's activities must be supressed. My own leaning would be to put him in an aeroplane for Uganda.'<sup>32</sup>

The A.I.C.C. had met in Allahabad on 29th April 1942. It was a stormy session. The Congress was not in favour of partition of the country and it rejected this 'treasonable suggestion' by 120 to 15 and adopted a counter resolution on May 2, 1942 that any proposal to disintegrate India by giving liberty to any component states or territorial unit to secede from the Indian Union or Federation would be detrimental to the best interests of the people of the different states and provinces and the country as a whole and the Congress, therefore, cannot agree to any such proposal. The Committee passed another resolution for non-violent resistance to the Japanese. 'In case any invasion takes place, it must be resisted. Such resistance can only take the form of non-violent non-co-operation, as the British Government has prevented the organization of national defence by the people in other way....We may not bend the knee to the aggressor nor obey any of his orders. We may not look to him for favours nor fall to his bribes....we will refuse to give them

up (homes and property) even if we have to die in the effort."<sup>34</sup> As a protest against this resolution, Rajagopalachari resigned from the Congress on 15th July, 1942. Thus the entire Congress began to share the thoughts of Gandhi and the ground was prepared for a revolt. He called upon the British on May 19 to retire from India. Nehru made a statement at his Press Conference at Lahore on May 22, 1942. He said that he was personally against vivisection of India and was thinking of Federation of India, China, Iran and Afghanistan. He would fight separation issue with all the power that he could command.<sup>35</sup> Gandhi wrote in the 'Harijan' on May 25, 1942 that vivisection of India was a sin. Reports reached the Home Department on May 26, 1942 that Gandhi intended to launch some kind of a mass movement in the near future. The main-spring of the new movement was the demand for an immediate and complete separation of Britain and India not after but during the war. Amery wrote a letter to Linlithgow on May 28, 1942 in this way : "...That Congress should disintegrate and be replaced by more realist statesmanship. On the other hand, if Nehru and Co. are really prepared, Gandhi consentient with them, to embark on a policy of real mischief, then I hope you will not hesitate or lose a moment in acting firmly and swiftly. Don't refer to me if you want to arrest Gandhi or any of them."<sup>36</sup> Further information reached the Home Department on May 30 that Gandhi was prepared to take fuller responsibility for the moment himself.

Sapru had issued a Press statement at Allahabad on April 29, 1942 in this way : 'Outstanding fact is that dead-lock which Cripps came to solve continues and his visit has left behind sense of disappointment and frustration. It is particularly regrettable that negotiations should have ended so abruptly when gulf on question of defence had nearly been bridged. I knew Mahatma had (taken) very (omission) line against Cripps proposals, so line taken by Azad and Nehru on behalf of Congress was more moderate than one was entitled to expect. It is therefore a pity that negotiations should have broken down on question whether Executive Council should give some sort of assurance that its decisions would be accepted by him."<sup>37</sup>

## Notes

1. Nicholas Mansergh, *The Transfer of Power, 1942-47*, Vol. London, 1979, p. 4.
2. *ibid.*, p. XII.
3. *ibid.*, p. 113.
4. *ibid.*, p. 233.
5. *ibid.*, p. 256.
6. *ibid.*, pp. 192-93.
7. *ibid.*, pp. 310-11.
8. *ibid.*, p. 396.
9. *ibid.*, p. 410.
10. *ibid.*, p. 413.
11. *ibid.*, p. 416.
12. *ibid.*, p. 441.
13. *ibid.*, pp. 462-463.
14. *ibid.*, p. 512.
15. *ibid.*, pp. 565-566.
16. Norman, Dorothy, *Nehru II*, p. 81.
17. Nicholas Mansergh, *The Transfer of Power, London, 1979*, p. 632.
18. *ibid.*, p. 731.
19. *ibid.*, p. 739.
20. *ibid.*, p. 745.
21. Norman, Dorothy, *Nehru II*, p. 90.
22. *ibid.*, p. 752.
23. *The Indian Annual Register, 1942*, II, p. 2.
24. Menon, V.P., *Transfer of Power*, p. 136.
25. Quoted in Brecher, Michael, *Nehru*, p. 281.
26. Brecher, Michael, *Nehru*, pp. 281-282.
27. *ibid.*, p. 806.
28. Norman, Dorothy, *Nehru II*, p. 105.
29. Harijan (Ahmedabad), 26 April 1942.
30. *ibid.*
31. *ibid.*, Vol. II p. 193.

32. *ibid.*, Vol. II p. 216.
33. Quoted in V.P. Menon's book, "Transfer of Power", p. 140.
34. *The Indian Annual Register*, 1942 I, pp. 293-94.
35. *ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 113.
36. *ibid.*, Vol. II p. 141.
37. *ibid.*, p. 866.

## SEVEN

### **QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT, SUMMER 1942**

There is a detailed reference in the War Cabinet Paper of 16th June 1942 about the policy to be adopted towards Gandhi. The Secretary of State for India had prepared a memorandum in this way : 'So far it is certain what degree of support Gandhi may receive from Nehru (though in a recent utterance Gandhi says that he and Nehru have drawn closer together of late and the Viceroy has received reports that Nehru has given way to Gandhi's views), or from the Congress Working Committee which was in session last week. There has undoubtedly been a division of opinion in Congress circles but no evidence yet of a substantial break away from Gandhi's unofficial leadership. Nor is it clear what form the threatened movement will take : mass civil disobedience is suggested, which may be in the form of a non-tax campaign, or resistance to military measures in Eastern India. Whatever the actual plans may be, we must be prepared for a movement instigated by Gandhi to defy the law of the land, and incidentally to obstruct the war effort....The Viceroy, while recognising the

hold that Gandhi had on world opinion, particularly in the U.S.A., sees that the time may be imminent when active measures will have to be taken to restrain Gandhi and Congress.. .Gandhi cannot be permitted to flout the law of the land and must be treated like any other law-breakers."<sup>1</sup> Gandhi had become a difficult problem for the British Government as is evident from a letter of Amery to Linlithgow, dated June 17, 1942 : "My own feeling, as I have already suggested in a telegram, is that if Gandhi is really troublesome the best thing will be to put him in a plane and fly him straight to join U Saw in Uganda."<sup>2</sup>

Linlithgow sent a telegram to Amery on June 26, 1942 regarding present position vis-a-vis of Gandhi and Congress : 'We must be prepared to contemplate the arrest of Gandhi, and if necessary of other leaders if circumstances so dictate. I attach relatively little importance to the other leaders, but Gandhi is a special case. If we are forced to arrest him, alternatives are to intern him outside India or in India. I have carefully considered these alternatives. In the result I conclude in favour of interning him in this country on the same lines as we had in view previously, viz. in a comfortable house probably in the Bombay presidency, and giving all due consideration to him."<sup>3</sup>

Pandit Nehru declared at his press interview at Allahabad on July 31, 1942 that, unless the country's desire for independence was clearly recognized, any attempt by Britain to call a Round Table Conference to solve India's problems would be unacceptable to Congress. Mahatma Gandhi now invoked the slogan 'Quit India'. It was declared, 'Leave India at once, he urged, so that a free India could mobilize its full strength against the Japanese menace. Beyond this slogan nothing was spelled out, though Gandhi was certainly thinking of mass civil dis-obedience if the British did not heed his call.'<sup>4</sup>

The Congress Working Committee was called in Wardha on 6th July to discuss the 'Quit India' resolution. It was a stormy meeting. Mahatma Gandhi had to face a tough opposition even from Nehru. The discussion lasted for a week (till 14th

July). According to one member of the Working Committee in 1942, half the Committee opposed him at the outset. Another told prof. Brecher that Gandhi finally threatened to leave the Congress and 'out of the sands of India create a movement which would be larger than the Congress itself.'<sup>6</sup> At this threat, his colleagues surrendered and the resolution was adopted. It called on the British to 'Quit India' and transfer power to Indian hands. The extract of the resolution is as follows : "In making the proposal for the withdrawal of British rule from India, the Congress has no desire whatsoever to embarrass Great Britain or the Allied powers in their prosecution of the war, or in any way to encourage aggression on India or increase pressure on China by helping Japanese or any other power associated with the Axis-Group. Nor does the Congress intend to jeopardise the defense capacity of the Allied powers. The Congress is therefore agreeable to the stationing of the armed forces of the Allies in India, should they so desire, in order to ward off and resist Japanese or other aggression and to protect and help China" ... "Should, however, this appeal fail, the Congress cannot view without the gravest apprehension the continuation of the present state of affairs. The Congress will then be reluctantly compelled to utilize all the non-violent strength it might have gathered since 1920. Such a widespread struggle would inevitably be under the leadership of Gandhiji. As the issues raised are of the most vital and far-reaching importance to the people of India as well as to the people of the United Nations, the Working Committee therefore refer them to the All India Congress Committee for final decision."<sup>7</sup>

The Congress Working Committee adopted a resolution on July 10, 1942, at Wardha. The resolution ran as follows 'Working Committee issue following instructions for guidance of people concerned and hope that Government will take immediate and necessary steps to remove grievances and that people will carry out their instructions as circumstances demand, provided that in all cases before final decision to disobey an order or resist any measure is taken, all avenues of negotiations shall be thoroughly explored.'<sup>7</sup> But this resolution was misinterpreted by Amery as it appears from a letter written by Amery

to Churchill on July 13, 1942 : "The object of the resolution, which is apparently preliminary to a more general resolution telling us to clear out of India, is obviously to create a general atmosphere of disturbance and to provoke cases of open conflict with authorities.. I hope the Cabinet will this afternoon authorise Linlithgow to arrest Gandhi and the Congress Working Committee at once if the resolution is in fact in the terms published in the 'Hindustan Times' We are dealing with men who are now definitely our enemies, inclined to believe in the Victory of Japan and anyhow determined to make the most mischief they can."<sup>8</sup>

The resolution of the Congress Working Committee was released on July 14, 1942. The resolution ran in this way :

'The events happening from day to day and the experience that the people of India are passing through confirm the opinion of Congressmen that British rule in India must end immediately.... The freedom of India is thus not only in the interests of India, but also for a safety of the world and for the ending of Nazism, Fascism, Militarism and other forms of imperialism.... The Congress will then be reluctantly compelled to utilise all the non-violent strength it might have gathered since 1920. Such a widespread struggle will inevitably be under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. For this purpose the AICC will meet in Bombay on August 7, 1942.

Mr. Jinnah did not relish this resolution of the Working Committee. He issued his statement in this way :

"The latest decision of the Congress Working Committee on July 14, 1942 resolving to launch a mass movement if British do not withdraw immediately from India is the culminating point in the policy and programme of Mr. Gandhi and his Hindu Congress of black-mailing the British and coercing them to concede a system of the government and transfer power to that Government which would establish a Hindu Raj immediately under the aegis of the British bayonet, thereby throwing the Muslims and other minorities and their interest at the mercy of the Congress Raj."<sup>9</sup>

After the Congress resolution was released on July 14, the Government of India, Home Department sent a telegram to the

Secretary of State on July 16, 1942 in this way : "After careful investigation, we have come to conclusions (a) That resolution, as worded, does not afford good ground for immediate action against Congress at any rate until it has been ratified by AICC; and (b) That it would do us more harm than good to attempt to suppress it or even prohibit its publication pending ratification... We are however examining the question of whether the resolution as it stands provides basis for proclamation of Congress and arrest of Congress leaders. We shall communicate our conclusion on this point and as to further tactics as soon as possible. Meanwhile, we are asking provincial Governments to have their plans in complete readiness by August 7th and in the interval to confine action to enforcing the law against those individuals who clearly break it and especially those who instigate others to offer defiance in pursuance of first Working Committee resolution dealing with alleged grievances."<sup>9</sup> Linlithgow tried from July 16 to get the various parties and prominent individuals who did not sympathise with Gandhi's view to come out in public condemnation of the resolution. Gandhi made a statement on July 16, 'there is no question of one more chance. After all, it is an open rebellion.' Linlithgow thought that Gandhi would launch a mass movement.

The Congress resolution was not welcomed by all sections of the people. Sir Chimanlal Setalvad and Sir Cowasji Jahangir came out with statements expressing strong opposition. 'The Times of India' and the 'Bombay Chronicle' were not happy about it. The Bombay Sentinel was more openly antagonistic to the resolution. Lumley, the Governor of Bombay sent a confidential report to Linlithgow : 'But once the resolution is ratified, and provided there is no good reason to believe that civil disobedience will not be worked up. I think it will be important to strike before they have time to perfect their plans and stir up feeling, with regard to Gandhi himself, we still have the Aga Khan's house at Yeravda available. Linlithgow wanted to weaken the effects of the Congress resolution by sending a private and personal telegram to most of the Governors on July 18, 1942. It was told that 'we should do

all we can discreetly to stimulate these elements in the various provinces, who, by conviction, are opposed to Gandhi and the principles of the Congress resolution to get up in public and say so.' Jinnah was sufficiently outspoken in the 'Dawn' and elsewhere conveying his warning to the British Government of the consequences which they would expect if they yielded to Congress demands. Sir Thomas Stewart, I.C.S. Governor of Bihar, was endeavouring to stimulate public criticism of Congress resolution. He wanted to utilise the leader of the War Front in the direction of countering a movement. He desired the help of Chandraswar Pd. Narayan Singh in this game. But he was doubtful whether C.P.N. Singh and other fellow Zamindars would come into the open against Gandhi.

The Governor-General Linlithgow was seized of the problem from July 14 about the internment or deportation of the Congress leaders. He sent a telegram to Amery on July 21 in this way : 'I have told my people to get on with working out detailed plans of up to 15 people by air, preferably using the Arabian route to Uganda, so that, if we decide in favour of this course, there need be no delay and all details may be covered in advance.'<sup>10</sup> Amery wrote a letter to Viscount Cranborne the Secretary of State for Colonies on July 23, 1942 : "The idea is that the person removed should be removed far by air. It seems to be accepted that Gandhi, with his very high blood pressure, could not be so removed. It might however be feasible to transport him by sea to Aden, where the attitude is suitable enough and the climate not much worse than that of Western India. I am putting to Linlithgow."<sup>11</sup> Sir A. Hope, the Governor of Madras sent a secret report to Linlithgow on July 23, 1942. Like Churchill, Hope was annoyed with the Congress leaders. The report ran in this way : 'Likewise, as regards the villain of the piece, Gandhi, he still has great influence among the ignorant masses, and any mention of his name or state of health excites them. If the movement comes to anything, I would suggest arresting him at once and deporting him to Mauritius or Kenya, and prohibit any reference to him in the press. If he fasts let it not be known; if he dies announce it six months later.'<sup>12</sup>

The Government of India, Home Department sent a telegram to Secretary of State on July 24, 1942 : 'We are advised that both Resolutions are prejudicial reports under Defence Rule 34 and that first resolution would provide legal-grounds for declaring Congress unlawful association under Criminal Law Amendment Act, inasmuch as it contains direct and authoritative instructions to the people interfere with the administration of law in certain circumstances.... We propose that all arrests except Gandhi's should be under Defence Rule 26 or 129, thereby relating them pointedly to war necessities and avoiding publicity and excitement of trials.'<sup>13</sup> It is not clear, why, Linlithgow wanted to deport Patel only. He wrote a letter to the Governor of Bombay, on July 27 in this way : Incidentally, I think it most important to dispose of Patel, whatever we do with the rest of them, and would like your own opinion on specific question of case for deporting him." But this was not appreciated by Lumley, the Governor of Bombay. He sent a telegram to Linlithgow on July 28 : "To deport Patel alone would provide him with a halo of martyrdom above the others and I do not favour it." The Governor of Bihar sent a telegram to Linlithgow on July 28, 1942 in which he did not like the idea of deportation. It was said in the telegram: 'If at all, I am strongly of opinion imprisonment in India is preferable to deportation. Deportation would certainly be regarded as unduly harsh and if a mishap should occur to (say) Rajendra or Syed Mahmud, both ailing men, while in exile, there would be a serious revulsion of even moderate feeling in Bihar.'<sup>14</sup>

The Congress resolution was criticised by Ambedkar on July 22. He declared civil disobedience at this time "treachery to India" and "playing the enemy's game" and urged all Indians as a patriotic duty" to resist with all the power and resources at their command any attempt on the part of Congress to launch civil disobedience". Few Sikh M.L.As. including Sardar Naunihal Singh, Sardar Yogendra Singh and Gurbachan Singh also opposed the Congress resolution.

The Indian situation was becoming much critical. Chiang-Kai-shek drew the attention of Roosevelt to this situation.

The American President sent a confidential letter to Curchill on July 30, 1942. This letter contained the contents of Chiang's letter. Chiang-Kai-shek appreciated the aspirations of the Indian National Congress. The following was the text of the message : "Inevitably Britain will regard the Indian National Congress, in seeking National independence, is dominated by sentiment rather than by reason ... I think that in launching the freedom movement today when Axis aggression is a pressing reality, the Indian Congress must have felt in their hearts a certain amount of anguish. If however the United Nations should show them no sympathy and pursue a *Laissez Faire* policy and thereby cause them to despair, I greatly fear that following the National Congress meeting in August there is danger of the situation getting out of control. In case an anti-British movement or some other unfortunate incident occurs in India, the United Nations war in the East will be adversely affected immediately....The United States as the acknowledged leader of democracy has a natural and vital role to play in bringing about a successful solution of the problem. In saying so, I have not the slightest intention to arouse attention by exaggerated statements."<sup>15</sup> But Churchill was firm in maintaining the unity of the British Empire. He sent a personal letter to Roosevelt in this way : "The Congress party in no way represents India and is strongly opposed by over 90 million Mohammadans, 40 million untouchables, and the Indian States comprising some 90 millions, to whom we are bound for treaty....His Majesty's government here have no intention of making any offer beyond the sweeping proposals which Sir Stafford Cripps carried to India. So far as I am concerned, I could not accept responsibility for making further proposals at this stage."

Meanwhile, the Government of India completed its preparation to meet the situation created by the Congress Resolution. The Government of India, Home Department sent a telegram to Secretary of State on August 3, 1942. The plan of campaign against Congress was discussed in this way : "On receipt of telegram from Government of India, (a) Bombay Government

will arrest Gandhi and all members of Working Committee who may be in Bombay under Defence Rule 26 (b) Each provincial Government will proclaim under Criminal Law Amendment Act Congress Working Committee, All-India Congress Committee and each provincial Congress Committee operating within its jurisdiction, but not Indian National Congress as a whole. (c) Each provincial Government will then seize relevant offices and funds and also arrest under Defence Rule 26 all individuals whom they consider complex and likely to organise and launch mass movement. Gandhi will be arrested under Defence Rule 26 and not Regulation III and will be detained in Bombay Presidency and not Sevagram. Mahadev Desai, Mira Ben and Doctor Sushila Nair (Lady doctor) will be permitted to accompany Gandhi if they voluntarily accept restrictions on communication which will be imposed on Gandhi himself. If first two refuse to accept these conditions they will also be arrested under Defence Rule 26. Place or places in which members of Working Committee arrested in Bombay (except Mrs. Sarojini Naidu) will be confined has not yet been finally settled but will probably be in Bombay Presidency. Mrs. Naidu will accompany Gandhi....If unfortunately Gandhi fasts, "Cat and mouse" procedure will be followed as on previous occasions. He will be given every facility to take food and receive constant medical attention but will be released as soon as his life is in danger to avoid possibility of his death as a prisoner." Linlithgow sent a telegram on August 3, to Amery mentioning that he had decided Ahmednagar as the best place for the Working Committee. He had fully devised tactics and strategy in dealing with the Congress. He sent a telegram to Amery on August 5 mentioning that the members of the Working Committee would be kept at Ahmednagar fort and Gandhi would use Aga Khan's Palace at Poona. He was against deportation. The Executive Council of the Governor-General opposed this idea. At last Amery accepted the viewpoints of Governor-General. This matter was discussed in the meeting of the British Cabinet. The Cabinet fully appreciated the Governor-General's difficulties and on August 7, 1942 Amery sent a telegram to Linlithgow concurring with his views. The idea of deportation was

dropped.

The Congress Working Committee met in Bombay on 5th August and ratified revised resolution for presentation to All-India Congress Committee. This modified presentation of their case in resolution of 14th July and particularly sought to present Congress as determined if freedom was granted to aid United Nations. The All-India Congress Committee met on 7th August, 1942 at Bombay. While the AICC was discussing the resolution of the Working Committee, the War Cabinet in London approved generally Government of India's proposed plan of action against Congress which comprised :

- (i) Arrest the Congress leaders including Gandhi, immediately on ratification of resolution.
- (ii) Provincial and All-India Committees to be declared unlawful; Offices and funds seized and all potential organisers arrested;
- (iii) If these measures fail to stultify civil disobedience Congress as a whole will be declared unlawful association and emergency power ordinance promulgated, giving fullest powers for dealing with all forms of Congress activity.<sup>1</sup>

The War Cabinet also agreed that they would not insist on deportation. They informed Linlithgow that they attached highest importance to prompt and decisive action.

Savarkar and other Mahasabha leaders called on their followers to give no active support to the Congress policy. Liberal leaders, headed by Sapru and Sastri, appealed for the abandonment of this movement as it would be 'prejudicial to the best interests of the country in respect of defence and other matters'. His Majesty's Government did not also like this resolution. Sir Stafford Cripps made it clear that the Government would not hesitate to take every possible step to meet the Congress challenge. Even the 'Daily Herald' of London, the official mouth piece of the British Labour Party did not appreciate this resolution. The paper expressed its opinion in this way : 'If you persist in demands which are at this moment

impossible to grant, you will cripple your cause and humble the influence of us who are your proud and faithful advocates. You will do worse, you will convey to the world the impression that India's leaders are incapable of distinguishing between the ideal of the United Nations and the petty standards of nationalism; that you rate political strategy higher than the prospect of liberty, equality and fraternity with the progressive peoples of the earth.<sup>16</sup>

The All India Congress Committee had met in Bombay on August 7. Pandit Nehru himself introduced the resolution of the Working Committee. The resolution was passed after a heated debate on 8th August at 10 p.m. Mahatma Gandhi had himself to participate in the debate. This resolution demanded the immediate end of British rule. If this demand was not conceded, it gave sanction for the starting of 'a mass struggle on non-violent lines on the widest possible scale under Gandhi's leadership'. The extract of the resolution is as follows : "Such a struggle must inevitably be under the leadership of Gandhi and the Committee requests him to take the lead and guide the nation in the steps to be taken. The Committee appeals to the peoples of India to face the dangers and hardships that will fall to their lot with courage and endurance, and to hold together under the leadership of Gandhiji, and carry out his instructions as disciplined soldiers of India's freedom. They must remember that non-violence is the basis of this movement."<sup>17</sup>

The resolution consisted of 700 words. This resolution was passed by a large majority, only thirteen members voted against it.<sup>18</sup> While the 'Quit India' Resolution' was debated at the A.I.C.C., a resolution was passed by the Governor-General-in-Council. This resolution stated that 'The Government would regard it as wholly incompatible with their responsibilities that a demand should be discussed the acceptance of which would plunge India into confusion and anarchy internally and would paralyse her effort in the common cause of human freedom.'<sup>19</sup> Mr. M.A. Jinnah reacted unfavourably and issued a press statement in Bombay in this way : 'I deeply regret that the Congress has finally declared war and has

launched a most dangerous mass movement in spite of numerous warnings and advice from various individuals, parties and organisations in this country.<sup>20</sup>

The Dean of Canterbury, Dr. Hewlett, said at a meeting of the India League in London, that the political situation in India has been brought about by faults on both sides, "although I don't agree with the policy of my friend Mr. Gandhi."<sup>21</sup>

Mr. Clement Attlee, Deputy Prime Minister also criticised the "Quit India" resolution in a speech at Aberdeen (on 6th September 1942) and expressed his opinion in this way: "We have made many mistakes in our treatment of the Indian problem, but we had given India more than a century of internal peace and government and had in the last twenty-five years made immense progress towards Indian self-government. Further progress was held back by disagreement among Indians and by difficulty of introducing democracy into a country of 300 million people at all stages of civilization."<sup>22</sup>

Whatever would have been the reactions about, the Government of India had decided much earlier to deal with this situation firmly. The Government had organised raid on the A.I.C.C. office of Allahabad on May 26, 1942. Mahatma Gandhi had taken objection to this raid and he had issued this statement : 'The Congress is not an illegal organisation.... There is nothing in it of which any member has any cause to be ashamed.'<sup>23</sup>

The Government of India reacted within a few hours of the adoption of 'Quit India' resolution by the A.I.C.C. at Bombay. The Bombay Government entailed some sixty separate visits, in the early hours of the morning of August 9, carried out by about sixty police parties. The plan had been kept secret. In fact, not a word of these preparations had leaked out. A Gujarati officer, Rao Bahadur Desai, the officer of the Special Branch was intimately concerned with these preparations. The Commissioner of Police and Rao Bahadur Desai effected Gandhi's arrest. The members of the Working Committee were also arrested. Everything else went according to plan

and at 7.15 a.m. the special train, with Gandhi and the Working Committee and about forty of Congress leaders, was on its way.<sup>24</sup> The D.I.G. was in charge of the train. Gandhi was detained at the Aga Khan's Palace in Poona, while the Committee members were taken to Ahmednagar Fort. Lumley wrote to Linlithgow "I think there is no doubt that the Congress leaders were taken by surprise and did not expect to be arrested so soon. This appears to have been the general trend of conversation on the train journey."<sup>25</sup> Arrests of both Congress Working Committee and of local leaders who were not in Bombay were also made quietly in all parts of the country. The swift action of the government was not liked by Chiang-Kai-shek. He said to the British Ambassador at Hwangshan, "The fact that arrests immediately followed the passing of the resolution of the Congress has made this impossible. Despite this, we still must seek a peaceful solution of the Indian problem." The Congress organisation was outlawed throughout British India.

After his arrest Gandhi had demanded that Vallabhbhai Patel and his daughter and the members of the Working Committee be accommodated with him at the Palace but the Governor-General turned down the request. Gandhi was also informed that it was not at present proposed to allow him have newspapers. Linlithgow informed Lumley that either three or four weeks no news from outside should reach Gandhi or the Working Committee. He was also to be denied the right of communication. His private Secretary, Mahadev Desai, who was confined with him died due to heart failure on August 15, 1943.

With the Congress out of the way, the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha became more vocal. In a resolution passed at Bombay on 20th August the Working Committee of the League condemned the Congress civil disobedience movement as an instrument of forcing the British Government and Muslims to surrender to Congress dictation, and directed Muslims to refrain from participating in it. At the same time it demanded from the British Government an immediate declaration

of guaranteeing to the Muslims the right of self-determination and pledge 'that they will abide by the verdict of it and give effect to the Pakistan scheme.' Hence the Muslims kept themselves aloof from the Movement.<sup>26</sup>

The Working Committee of the Hindu Mahasabha met at the end of August and it agreed with the Congress demand. It set up a Committee headed by Shyama Prasad Mookherjee to make a final effort for an Indo-British settlement on honourable terms, but this had no result.

As the news of the arrest of leaders spread over the country, the people became furious. There was no need for directives and planning. Congressmen and their sympathisers were galvanised into an immediate and spontaneous action. For more than a week business life was paralysed in Ahmedabad, Bombay, Delhi, Madrás, Bangalore and Amritsar. 33 persons were killed and several hundred including many policemen injured in four days in Bombay alone. People were also whipped in Bombay. In almost every major city mass demonstrations took place against the Government. Students and workers, shopkeepers and housewives marched through the streets, singing nationalist songs and demanded the release of Gandhi and the members of the Working Committee. They were peaceful at first. But tension was great and the authorities were nervous. In Delhi the police fired on forty-seven separate occasions during 11 and 12 August. In the U.P., they fired twenty-nine times between 9 and 21 August, killing seventy-six persons and severely injuring 114. In Calcutta serious demonstrations began on 13th August. In the Central Provinces the police killed sixty-four, wounded 102 and arrested 1088 in the first three weeks. The pattern was the same everywhere—protest meetings, police violence and arrests.

Students were in the vanguard. They walked out of the universities and started a campaign of sabotage derailing trains, cutting telephone wires, instigating peasants to withhold payment of taxes. Later, cases of arson and bomb throwing became common. The students of the Hindu University of

Benaras closed the campus gates to all officials and proclaimed the University 'Free India'.

Violence bred violence. In the United Province three police stations were burnt, four post offices razed to the ground and seventy-nine village records totally destroyed. In Mysore 32000 workers remained on strike for two days, while 80 per cent of all university students walked out. In Patiala eight students were shot while trying to raise the national flag over public buildings; 100 students were shot in a Mysore procession. The most brutal police atrocity was reported in Chimur in Bengal. In the Ballasore district of Orissa 200 were killed. Perhaps the most dramatic episode of the campaign occurred in the Midnapur district of Bengal.

Two tehsils succeeded in expelling all officials, declared themselves part of 'Free India' and maintained their independence 'for four months'.<sup>27</sup> Ballia (U.P.) also did a wonderful thing and the independence of Ballia was declared on August 30. Chitto formed an administration, arrested the officers of the British Government, seized the treasury of Armoury and took suitable steps to maintain law and order.

But the independence of Ballia could not be maintained for a long time. The British forces entered Ballia during the night of August 22 and 23, and the popular government was overthrown. Then the people of Ballia were looted, plundered, razed and ravaged. The same type of mass rising was seen at Azamgarh, Barabanki, Bijnour district, Pilibhit and Mathura districts.<sup>28</sup> Bihar did not lag behind. Seven students were shot dead near the Patna Secretariat, while those students were attempting to hoist the national flag at the secretariat building on August 11. In Bihar, Mr. Jaglal Choudhary personally took interest in the burning of a police station in the Saran district and he was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment. Mr. Jagat Narayan Lal was responsible for instigating a mob that committed arson and looting in Patna on August 12 and sentenced to two to three years imprisonment.<sup>29</sup>

By August 15, 1942, attempts had been made to interrupt communication. Linlithgow had authorised machine-gunning.

from air on saboteurs. But the movement went on. A large scale attempt to interrupt communication on railways either side of Patna continued unabated. There was large scale removal of rails, burning of rail sleepers and cutting of telegraph wires. The main elements of the movement were students. The student community played a significant role in it. Sir T. Stewart, the Governor of Bihar sent a secret report about Bihar on August 21. It was mentioned that processions and picketing of courts took place for the first two days. After the police firing on 11th August, telegraph poles complete with full equipment of wires were pulled over and branches of trees a foot and over in diameter were chopped down in Patna. The government called out the troops from Dinapore to ward off further attack on the New Capital and the power station. Patrol trains with troops moved both East and West and strong patrols passed through the Patna Bazar, removing road blocks. The road communications were opened up from Patna to Gaya. With rail, telegraph and telephone communications cut off the government had lost touch with other districts.

In North Bihar there had been extensive sabotage on the railways. The situation at Muzaffarpur had been brought under control by the troops. The lines from Muzaffarpur to Sonepur, to Samastipur and to Motihari remained open and lines from Sonepur to Chapra were dislocated. The lines from Mansi to Katihar remained disrupted. The line from Monghyr-cum-Jamalpur remained in good shape. There was a good deal of looting at Mokameh. The people had got hold of wagons containing Besa guns and S.A.A. One company of B.I. had been sent to Bhagalpur and Eastern Army had sent help into the Santhal Parganas. A battalion of Indian infantry had provided to Purnea. The situation in Chota Nagpur and Jamshedpur had improved by August 22, 1942. According to this report the students Community were the moving spirits though leading Congressmen like Jagat Narayan Lal, an ex-Parliamentary Secretary were in the forefront. The press supported the movement. The 'Searchlight' was suppressed at a fairly early stage and its editor was in jail. The Indian Nation had refused to publish press notes.<sup>34</sup> The villagers participated in the movement

in large numbers. At Marhowrah, 40 people had been killed as the result of firing. According to the telegram from Government of India to Secretary of State on September 5, 1942, 2 Air Force Officer, 1 British Officer and 4 British of other ranks were killed in Bihar.<sup>31</sup> Like other cutting of wires continued in Bihar even in the second week of September. The provincial government had taken action by enforcing collective responsibility for protection of wires and by applying collective fines ordinance. Some recrudescence of trouble arose in Muzaffarpur district and a serious meeting of 600 prisoners in Bhagalpur Central Jail took place by 7th September 1942. The government used troops and firings were also resorted to in the jail. The police strike at Jamshedpur were satisfactorily dealt with. The Government was still following the policy of Divide and Rule. The Governor of Bihar wanted a clear instruction whether collective fine would be imposed on Muslim also. The governor had suggested that collective fines should be imposed on Hindus and Muslims both. But Linlithgow sent a telegram to the Governor of Bihar on September 7, 1942 : 'I will do my utmost to expedite a decision, but pending formal official communication from Home Department, I suggest it would be well to go slow, or even desist altogether from realising fines from Muslims.'<sup>32</sup>

By September 10, 1942, the movement entered the final phase. It had lost its momentum. But North Bihar had still a good deal of problem. According to the police report in the Darbhanga district every police station except 5 had been attacked and in most cases the records and furniture were burnt. By September 15 restoration of order was making rapid progress in Bihar and elsewhere.

There took place an air crash near Pasraha railway station of the N F R. (Monghyr district). The people of the place killed the crew and an English man. Hence the people were machine gunned from the air near Pasraha.

The official version may be summed up as follows :

'Gandhi and other leaders were arrested on the morning of August 9. On that day there were disturbances in Bombay,

Ahmedabad and Poona, but the rest of the country remained quiet.

"On 10th August disturbances occurred also in Delhi and a few towns in the U.P., but still no serious repercussions were reported from elsewhere. It was from August that the situation began to deteriorate rapidly. From then onwards, apart from the hartal, protest meetings and similar demonstrations that were to be expected, concerted out-breaks of mob violence, arson murder and sabotage took place; and in almost all cases these were directed either against communications of all kinds, or against the police. Moreover, these outbreaks started simultaneously in widely separated areas in the provinces of Madras, Bombay and Bihar and also in the Central and United Provinces. Finally the damage done was so extensive as to make it incredible that it could have been perpetrated on the spur of the moment without special implements and previous preparations; and in many instances the manner in which it was done displayed a great deal of technical knowledge.

"The position was at one time extremely serious in the whole of Bihar except its most southern districts and in the eastern part of the U.P. In these areas the trouble soon spread from the big towns to the outlying areas; thousands of rioters gave themselves up to an orgy of destruction of communications and certain classes of Government property; whole districts, with their small defending forces of Government officials and police were isolated for days on end; a large part of the E.I. Railway and practically the whole of the B.& N.W. Railway systems were out of action. For a considerable period, Bengal was almost completely cut off from Northern India.

"In all the affected provinces, students, were in the forefront. Everywhere the Congress creed of non-violence was ignored and mobs were recklessly incited to extremes of fury.

"As regards sabotage activity in U.P. There was widespread destruction of the property of the Railways and posts and telegraphs."<sup>23</sup>

The All-India figures for casualty were as follows :—under heads (a) Military (b) Police (c) Railways (d) Posts and Telegraphs, (e) Other services :

- (a) Numbers killed by military firing 312. Numbers wounded by military firing 151. Fatal casualties suffered by military 11. Non-fatal casualties suffered by military 7 in addition 3 military men were killed and 27 injured in railway accident arising out of the movement.
- (b) Number of times police fired 367. Numbers killed by police firing 474. Numbers wounded by police firing 1225. (9) Fatal casualties suffered by police 34. Non-fatal casualties suffered by police 536. Police stations damaged or destroyed 73.
- (c) Fatal casualties amongst railway staff 1. Railway staff injured 33. Post offices attacked or destroyed 276. Derailments 45.
- (d) Posts and Telegraph staff killed nil. Posts and telegraphs staff injured 33. Post offices attacked 890, 26 destroyed and 367 seriously damaged. 6,000 cases of damage to telegraph telephone system. Loss in cash, stamps and valuables looted rupees 203,000.
- (e) Fatal casualties among other Government servants 11. Non-fatal casualties 24. Other Government buildings damaged 180.

Provincial figures for arrests were not accurate till October 2, 1942. Certain figures were as follows :

(a) Central Provinces—	4,800
(b) Bombay city	2,600
(c) Delhi	450

Figures for convictions and detentions were mostly incomplete. Former totalled 2098 in 6 provinces only and latter totalled 4940 in 5 provinces only. But these figures do not include Madras, United Provinces or Bihar.<sup>31</sup> Total number of persons convicted by courts upto end of 1942 was over 26,000.

Certain Congressmen had also been tried. Jaglal Choudhary, ex-Congress Minister of Bihar was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment under section 395, I.P.C. Jagat Narayan Lal, Parliamentary Secretary of Bihar Congress party, was sentenced to three years imprisonment.

So far about the official account, the following extracts from the official history of the Congress give the non-official version.

"The people grew insensate and were maddened with fury, when the slightest acts of disobedience of orders prohibiting meetings, processions and demonstrations, freedom of association and of opinion were put down with a mere lathi but with the rifle and the revolver, with the machine gun and the aerial firing. Within less than twelve hours of the arrests, the old story of brickbats and bullets got abroad....the mob on their part began to stone running Railways and stop trains and cars, damage Railway stations and set fire to them or property there in, loot grain shops, cut telegraph wires, rip on the tyres of cars, harass victoria, bullock carts and tongas. Besides these excesses initiated by the people at large, there were hartals throughout India despite the Ordinance prohibiting them in which the school and college students took a big hand in picketing. Educational institutions and universities very soon emptied and closed from one end of the country to another—from Dacca to Delhi expecting Aligarh and from Lahore to Madras. The Benares University, however, was taken possession of by the military at an early stage in the movement. Instances of paralysing Railway Traffic by removal of fishplates of rails or the rails themselves early figured on the field of Civil Disobedience, the Madras Mail being unable to proceed for a number of days and thereafter unable to proceed at nights for some time. In Bihar, Monghyr was isolated from all external contact for nearly two weeks. The Railway disorganisation was extreme in Bihar. In Bihar a mob attempted to storm the secretariat.

"The traffic was held up in the city of Bombay. Even private cars were not allowed to proceed unless there was a

Gandhi cap on the head of at least one of the passengers. The track for the tram car wheels were filled with finely ground stone which it was not easy to remove. It had been reported that rails of railways were fully greased with oil so as to prevent the action of brakes suddenly applied.”<sup>35</sup>

These accounts make it clear that the movement took a violent turn and the people tried to uproot the British Raj. Every where people took destructive activities. This movement went on till April 1943.<sup>36</sup> Jayaprakash Narayan played a remarkable role. But the government with the help of the police and military forces controlled the situation within few days. Everywhere Government repression was harsh, for this was the gravest threat to British rule since the rebellion of 1857. Besides police firing on unarmed crowds, there were mass arrests and extensive use of lathi charges to break up demonstrations. In short, it was the establishment of a police state, or as the Congress termed it ‘Ordinance Raj’. Rigid control of the press throughout the revolt prevented one part of the country from knowing what was happening. All kinds of atrocities were perpetrated by the Government. Lathi Charge, whipping, shooting, imprisonment, pillage, arson, rape, barbarous physical torture of individuals in a variety of ways, and collective fines (imposed mostly on the Hindus) were the order of the day.

A statement issued by A.I.C.C. in November 1942, refers to “looting and burning of villages, rape and rapine on a mass scale, machine gunning and even aerial attacks.”

The Civil Defence Secretary gave details of the time, date and number of air-raids on Calcutta, Chittagong and Feni areas from September 16, 1942 to February 10, 1943. The total casualties in the air-raids on India since April 1942 were 348 killed and 459 wounded.

According to an official statement made in the Central Assembly on 19th February, 1943, firing had been resorted to 538 times up to about the end of the year 1942, as result of which 940 were killed and 1830 were injured. According to another official statement made in the Central Assembly on 25th

1942, mob in Bihar, Orissa and Bengal were machine gunned from the air at five following places :—

- (1) Twelve miles south of Bihar Sharif in the district of Patna at a place called Giriyak Railway line.
- (2) Fifteen miles South of Kursela in the Bhagalpur district on the railway line proceeding to Sahibganj from Bhagalpur.
- (3) Sixteen miles south of Krishnagar in the Nadia District.
- (4) In the district of Monghyr near the Railway stop (Signal) between Pasraha and Narayanpur of the N.E. Railway.
- (5) In the state of Talchar at a place called Talchar.<sup>37</sup>

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has commented on these official versions in this way :

“Official estimates of the number of people killed and wounded by police or military firing in the 1942 disturbances are : 1,328 killed and 3200 wounded. These figures are certainly gross under-estimates for it has been officially stated that such firing took place on at least 538 occasions, and besides this people were frequently shot at by the police or the military from moving lorries.

“It is very difficult to arrive at even an approximately correct figure. Popular estimates place the number of deaths at 25000 but probably this is an exaggeration. Perhaps 10000 may be nearer the mark.”

The official figures for persons arrested, convicted and detained without trial during the period from August 9 to the end of the year 1942, were, respectively, 60,229, and approximately 26000 and 18000. The military casualties were 11 killed and 7 wounded.

Men, rightly or wrongly supposed to be saboteurs at work on the railway lines, were machine-gunned from air at five different places. In at least one case the Government admitted that the coolies were mistaken for saboteurs.

Thus the Government committed brutal cruelties. As a specimen we may quote the following extract from a letter written by the socialist leader Dr. Rammanohar Lohia to Professor Harold Laski on January 3, 1946.

"I was ill-treated in one way or other for over four months; I was kept awake day after day, night after night, the longest single stretch running into ten days; when I resisted the police in their efforts to make me stand, they wheeled me round on my menacled hands on the matted floor....If beating and bastiandoing to death or near about it and forcing the human mouth to the uses of a sewer alone to be considered atrocities, these and worse have taken place. I will give you one or two instances, as readily come to my mind. One man swallowed poison in a police outpost of the Bombay province, another threw himself down a well in a U.P. Jail, and of these who died through beating or illtreatment after their arrest, there is no checking up except that in one Orissa jail out of over 300 in the country, the number of deaths among political prisoners rose to around 29 or 39, I cannot exactly recollect."<sup>38</sup>

The campaign was short-lived but intensive. It was suppressed by the military personnel. There is a very detailed letter from M. L. Saksena<sup>39</sup> to Linlithgow which shows that the movement was suppressed with the help of the military. The letter of Sept. 10, 1942 ran in this way : "Your Excellency, has, no doubt, convened the present session to get an endorsement of the repressive of your government and to have it proclaimed to the world that all was quiet on the 'Indian front'. This is indeed the truest reproduction of the Hitlerian tactics. The promulgation of lawless laws and ordinances, the gagging and throttling of all self-respecting and independent newspapers, the suppression of all news and views, except those doled out by the provincial and district Goebbel's, the internment without trial, of thousands of partiot, the banning of Congress and other organisations and meetings, lathi charges, firing, public floggings, shootings resulting in loss of life and limb to thousands now summoning an attenuated legislature to ditto Your Excellency's Government are but Maxmillian rendering of Nazi methods designed to terrorise and cow down a whole people fired with

the spirit of freedom and democracy and which the allies profess to be fighting for. I know these methods are being justified because of the exigencies of the war and the enemy being at over very gates. If so, you only provide a justification for Hitler and other dictators as well. For have they also not been dangling the fear of war before the eyes of their people and exhorting them to suffer and submit to the authoritarian regime in the wider interests of their respective countries... I am convinced that the country had witnessed a regular "black and tan" regime and even worse. Jallianwala Baghs have been enacted at more than one place. To cite one instance from my own constituency I may refer to Sitapur. Peaceful demonstrators were fired upon to teach them a lesson, and at the lowest computation the number of killed, I am informed is sixty, besides many more injured: although the official report gave only 5 killed. Those killed were removed in lorries and disposed of by the police without any post mortem.<sup>10</sup> The last portion of the letter ran in this way : "How have Government been treating thousands of those arrested and detained in connection with the present movement ? Perhaps you are aware that they are not allowed to have even interviews with wives and children nor are they permitted to write even business letters. Further they are not allowed even their clothes and beddings from outside nor are they supplied with any newspapers." Mr. Churchill, The Prime Minister of Britain, declared triumphantly in the House of Commons that the "disturbances were crushed with all the weight of the Government."<sup>11</sup> Large military reinforcements were sent to India. Upto the beginning of October, 1942 the British "used 112 battalions in putting down recent uprising."

Whipping had been used frequently to suppress the movement. In Bihar whipping had been inflicted in three districts. In Madras, students of Engineering College and Annamalai University had staged protests against sentence of whipping carried out on two students of mofussil college on Aug 16, 1942. In central provinces, 186 persons were whipped. In Sind 176 persons were whipped in martial law area including a number of school boys called for taking part in the movement.

The campaign failed, inevitable in the face of overwhelming armed strength, but the feelings of politically conscious India had been expressed. The tragedy was that it assumed violent forms, against the will of Gandhi and at a delicate stage in the War. In time the 'August Movement' became a legend, the last open challenge to British rule. Five years later Independence came.

### Character and Organisation

The 'Quit India' resolution intended a mass rebellion.<sup>42</sup> The resolution had made it clear that it would be a non-violent struggle. The struggle took a violent turn after the arrest of the Congress leaders. The Working Committee had not prepared any programme of action beyond the slogan 'Quit India'. Hence it has been said that the Government of India precipitated the revolt and must bear responsibility for everything that followed.

It was certain that Gandhi had not fixed any date for the inauguration of the civil disobedience movement. Had he been given time, he would have followed a non-violent struggle.

The version of the Government of India is a different one. The Government had organised a raid on the A.I.C.C. Office of Allahabad on May 26, 1942. The Government seized certain papers as the result of the raid. The Government came to this conclusion that the Congress would launch a rebellion in the country. The evidence is dubious for it contradicts the secret reports of the special Branch of the Intelligence Bureau.<sup>43</sup> On the contrary, Gandhi had no plan of action at anytime. But between the Wardha and the Bombay meetings, 14 July to August 7, 1942, all Congress leaders indicated in public speeches the nature of the struggle envisaged by Gandhi. Nehru told the peasants in a mass meeting on July 27 that there would be a mass movement in the country within a very short time and it was the duty of every kisan to understand the movement properly and to respond to the call. ..The Congress had now burnt its boats and was to embark on a desperate campaign. This will be our final struggle.

Rajendra Prasad (afterwards President of the Republic of India) said : "According to Gandhiji's view the movement would

kindle a fire all over the country and would only be extinguished after either obtaining the independence of the country or wiping out Congress organisation altogether."

Vallabhbhai Patel, addressing students in Ahmedabad, is reported to have asked them to pick any item from the struggles that had been fought so far since 1919, and also to tell every Britisher to Quit India immediately.<sup>44</sup>

These letters indicate that the people had been asked beforehand to participate in the struggle but these letters fail to support the view of the Government that these leaders had planned the campaign of 1942. But the point at issue is this, how far Congress leaders were responsible for violent turn of the campaign? Though Gandhi had not chalked the programme of the movement, but a circular issued in Andhra contained a twelve-point plan of action to begin after Gandhi gave the signal for civil disobedience. The one important item in the programme was 'to run parallel government in competition with the British Government.' However, there is no evidence that it was drafted at the instigation or with the support of the Congress High Command. So total responsibility for violence could not be fixed on Congress leaders alone.

The movement became violent after the arrest of the Congress leaders. The people in general in absence of any programme acted in their way. The Government used all kinds of atrocities on the people. The 'Times' in a leading article on India said : "Repression unaccompanied by any constructive policy is likely to prove as vain and ineffective in war as in peace—and far more dangerous."<sup>45</sup> Hence this harsh policy of the Government instigated people to behave in a violent way. The Congress socialists led by Jayaprakash Narayan adopted violence for political objectives. Jayaprakash Narayan had escaped from the Hazaribagh Central Jail on 9th November, 1942 and he soon organised a Central Action Committee. He openly repudiated Gandhiji's policy of non-violence. He issued the first of his famous 'letters to fighters for freedom' from Delhi in 1942. One of them was an appeal to American servicemen stationed in India not to co-operate with the British 'who are

waging a fascist war against us'. He asked them to consider him a fugitive prisoner of war. "Whoever among you may become a prisoner of war will consider it his duty" he wrote, "escape from the enemy's prison as soon as he has an opportunity....I want to dedicate myself at the altar of the liberation of our country". Jayaprakash Narayan established a terrorist head quarters and training centres for saboteurs in Nepal. So the Congress, Socialists and some middle rank leaders of the party called for retaliation after the early days of police action.

The Viceroy charged that Gandhi was partly responsible for the violence because of his 'Do or Die' statement of 8 August. In his closing remarks at the Bombay session Gandhi had said : 'Here is a Mantra (dictum), a short one that I give you. You may imprint it on your hearts and let every breath of yours give expression to it. The Mantra is "Do or Die". We shall either free India or die in the attempt; we shall not live to see the perpetuation of our slavery....let that be your pledge'. But Gandhi had made it too clear that the Mantra 'Do or Die' was to take place within the context of non-violence. So this was not an excitement to violence, as the Government understood. Neither Gandhi nor important Congress leaders were responsible for violence. The rank and file of the Congress and the general people indulged in violence. Perhaps this view of Brecher is perhaps correct that the Government and the Congress were guilty of large scale violence.<sup>6</sup>

The movement was practically crushed by force by the Government within two or three months, though the movement lingered on till April 1943.<sup>47</sup>

Valour, courage and heroic self-sacrifice could not make up for the lack of leadership and necessary equipment.

#### Reactions in India

All sections of the Indian population did not participate in this movement. The reactions of most of the parties and groups were adverse in respect of the idea of a mass movement.

I have explained earlier that the Muslim League condemned

the August movement. The reactions of the Hindu Mahasabha and the National Liberal Federations were also unfavourable.<sup>48</sup> Mr. Savarkar, President of the Hindu Mahasabha called on the Hindus to give no support to the movement. The Council of the National Liberal Federation had expressed its opinion against any mass movement as early as July 6, 1942. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru characterised the Congress resolution of August 7 as 'ill-conceived and inopportune'. The attitude of the Mahasabha underwent a change and it stood for India's independence. It adopted a resolution on August 31, 1942 and demanded the formation of a National Government. Other minorities like the Indian Christians, the Sikhs, the Anglo-Indians and the Parses were all opposed to this movement. The Depressed Classes of Bombay did not like the movement. But the Depressed Classes of Bihar and Madras were in favour of this movement.

The Communist Party opposed the Bombay Resolution of the Congress<sup>49</sup> This Party also condemned the repressive policy of the Government. They advocated positive attitude towards the 'war effort' not towards the Government. The Radical Democratic Party of M.N. Roy disliked the Congress policy and action. Mr. Roy was against any immediate independence or even Indianisation of the Executive council.<sup>50</sup>

Hence Indian opinion was divided on this issue. The upper classes of Hindus also did not appreciate the mass movement.

The Upper classes subscribed to the Government of India war loan and they got the title of 'Sir', 'Rai Bahadur' and 'Rai Saheb'.<sup>51</sup>

#### Causes of Failure of the Movement

The movement or revolt or 'open rebellion' (as Gandhi had termed it) failed due to three main reasons :

(1) Tactical mistakes of organisation and planning; (2) Loyalty of the Services and (3) Superior Physical strength of the Government.

Gandhi could not get time to chalk out a programme of action. When Gandhi and all other important Congress leaders

were put behind bars, then the movement which started, took the shape of a mass movement. But there were no leaders and co-ordinated programme. Jayaprakash Narayan had said that "the lack of organisation was so considerable that even important Congressmen were not aware of the progress of the revolt and, till late in the course of the rising it remained a matter of debate in many Congress quarters whether what the people were doing, was really in accordance with the Congress programme."

The second reason was that the administrative machinery remained complete loyal to the Government. A high Government official told the special correspondent of the 'New York Times' that "of 23,000 police, of whom less than a thousand were British all remained loyal to their salt."<sup>52</sup> The police and the bureaucracy remained loyal to the Government. Hence Mr. Churchill praised "the loyalty and steadfastness of the brave Indian police as well as Indian official class generally" The Gurkhas, the Baluchis, and the white soldiers did not hesitate in killing Indian peasants.

The third and the last reason was that the Government had superior physical power and so the revolt was put down. The Government became so much brutish that people were machine-gunned from the air. Hence there was no chance of success to the people.

As regards the nature of the revolt, rich and the upper class remained aloof from the struggle. The lower middle class and students were in the van-guard of the revolt and so in the words of Dr. Ambar Prasad, the revolt may be described as a student-peasant-middle class rebellion. The student provided the leadership and the peasantry the fighting strength.<sup>53</sup>

### General Review

Seen in historical perspective, 'the August Movement was the outcome of persistent British intransigence during the period 1939-42. This had created such deep frustration among Indian nationalists that the only course of action was civil disobedience, as a symbolic act of defiance and protest. If

instead, violence ensued, it was precipitated by the Government of India's abrupt and repressive action on August 9 which decapitated the Indian National Congress of its entire leadership.

In recalling 'the August Struggle' fourteen years later, Nehru remarked : 'I don't think that the action we took in 1942 could have been avoided or ought to have been avoided. It might have been in slightly different terms: that is a different matter. Circumstances drove us into a particular direction. If we had been passive then, I think we would have lost all our strength.'<sup>54</sup>

R.C. Majumdar has told that the great revolt of 1942 was really a soldier's battle. 'The General bungled, but all glory to the soldiers who gave a good account of themselves and laid down their lives as martyrs to the cause of their country's freedom'. But the first part of Dr. Majumdar's opinion is open to challenge. The General did not get time to manage the affairs. Had Gandhi and other leaders not been arrested, the movement would have perhaps followed a non-violent path. Whatever may be the short-coming of the movement, it brought India's independence nearer to the goal. Sardar Patel paid following tributes to the soldiers of freedom : "Never before had such widespread uprising happened in India in the history of the British Raj, as they did during the last three years. We are proud of the spirit in which the people reacted....The leaders were all of a sudden kidnapped from the midst of the people and people acted on the spur of the moment....Non-violence had taken no doubt deep roots, but one had to face the reality that violence was the order of the day in the whole world. It would be like the devil quoting the scriptures, if the world outside criticised India if she switched over from non-violent to violent attempt to regain independence."<sup>55</sup>

#### **British Statements**

While the country was passing through the rigours of an intensive struggle, Mr. Churchill made a very painful statement

in London on November 10, 1942 : "We have not entered this war for profit or expansion but only for honour and to do our duty in defending this right.

"Let me, however, make this clear, in case there should be any mistake about it in any quarter : we mean to hold our own. I have not become the King's First Minister in order to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire. For that task, if ever it were prescribed, some one else would have to be found, and under a democracy I suppose the nation would have to be consulted."<sup>58</sup>

The last phase of 1942 was dominated by Raja Gopalachari's plan. He, a former Madras Premier, had resigned from the Congress Working Committee. He told Press men on October 21, 1942 : 'If I can get a plane and a passport, neither disinclination nor work will stand in the way of going to England.'<sup>57</sup> Referring to statements that no specific proposals for a settlement of the Indian question had so far been advanced, he outlined a scheme for a provisional government. He was convinced that both Congress and the Muslim League would accept the proposals. The provisional Government was to consist (a) of five Congress leaders (b) of Mr. Jinnah and as many of his Muslim League colleagues as he would wish to bring in; and (c) of three persons selected either by the Congress and the Muslim League or by the Viceroy. It is difficult to say even at this stretch of time whether the Congress leaders would have agreed to his plan.

The difference between Rajagopalachari and the rest of the Congress leaders was that Rajagopalachari wanted to make terms with the Muslim League by admitting the possibility of Pakistan, so that a joint Congress-League demand for "a national government with full powers was made." He conceded a lot by offering the Muslim League as many seats as it liked in the Executive. But the War Cabinet in London did not permit him to visit England and suggested that an agreed settlement of the Indian problem must come about in India, between the Indian parties. He was not allowed to see Gandhi in jail. Jinnah issued a statement and said that there could be no

settlement without agreement on fundamentals. These were that all parties, including the British Government, should agree to the Muslim right to self-determination and undertake to abide by the verdict of Muslim plebiscites in those zones (north-west and eastern zones) where the Mussalmans are in a majority and give effect to it. Further he said that it would be more desirable for people to stop this kite-flying.<sup>58</sup>

An article by Vernon Bartlett entitled "A Plan to End the Indian Deadlock" appeared in the 'News Chronicle' of October 29, 1942. Mr. Bartlett's proposals were that the Executive Council should be Indianised and the representation should include those sections of Congress Party which were prepared to play and 16 chamber of Princes. The Council would maintain its formal responsibility to the Crown but otherwise would be responsible only to itself. Rajagopalachari reacted to this plan and said that Bartlett's scheme was vitiated by a background of suspicion 'fought thy' of applying the principle to the people of India' and was 'constructed entirely on the basis of hand-picked individuals' whereas the essence of his own proposal was 'the background of Indian responsibility'.

Both these plans could not work owing to various factors already explained. The year 1942 called and the Indian political situation did not improve at all.

### Notes

1. The Indian Annual Register, 1942 Vol. II pp, 217-218.
2. Ibid., Vol. II p. 225.
3. Ibid., Vol. II p. 273.
4. Brecher, Michael, Nehru, pp. 284-85.
5. Ibid. p. 289.
6. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru II, pp. 119-120.
7. Ibid., Vol. II, p. 363.

8. *Ibid* , Vol. II, pp. 376 77.
9. *The Indian Annual Register*, 1942, Vol. II, pp. 12-13.
10. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru II, pp. 394-396.
11. *Ibid* , Vol. II p. 40 .
12. *Ibid* p. 438.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 443.
14. *Ibid.*, Vol. II pp. 447-449.
15. *Ibid.* Vol. II p. 478.
16. *Ibid.*, Vol. II p. 532.
17. Quoted in V.P. Menon's book, 'Transfer of Power. p 142.
18. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru II, p. 123.
19. *The Indian Annual Register*, 1942 II, p 17.
20. *Ibid*.
21. *Ibid*
22. *Ibid* , p 24
- 23 *Ibid* , p 29
24. *Ibid* , p 15
- 25 *Ibid* , Vol. II p. 618
26. *Ibid* , p. 807.
27. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 576
28. *Ibid* , 1942, II, p 26. Nicholas Manseargh, *The Transfer of Power*, vol. II, p. 771.
29. *The Indian Annual Register*, 1942 II, p. 194.
30. *Ibid*
31. *Ibid*.
32. *Ibid.*, Vol. II pp. 789-791.
33. *Ibid* , p. 908
34. *Ibid* , Vol. II, p. 916
35. Quoted in R.C Majumdar's book "Freedom Movement," pp. 647-650.
36. *Ibid.*, Vol II. Dr. R.C. Majumdar has given the wrong figures in his book "Freedom Movement" pp. 647-650.
37. *Ibid*. p. 651-52
38. *The Indian Annual Register*, 1943, I, p. 50.
39. *Ibid*. p. 41.
40. Quoted in R.C. Majumdar's book 'Freedom Movement', III pp. 659-60.

- 41 A Member of the Central Legislative Assembly
- 42 Freedom Movement, Vol II p 938 242
- 43 Ibid III, pp 659-60
- 44 Brecher, Michael, Nehru, p 91
- 45 Quoted in R C Majumdar's book 'Freedom Movement, p 663
- 46 The Indian Annual Register 1942, II, p 18
- 47 Brecher, Michael, Nehru, p 292
- 48 The Indian Annual Register 1943, Vol I, p 50
- 49 Ibid
- 50 Ibid
- 51 Ibid
- 52 Ibid
- 53 Quoted in 'The Indian Revolt of 1942,' p 124
- 54 Ibid, p 77
- 55 Brecher, Michael, Nehru, p 294
- 56 Quoted in R C Majumdar's book "Freedom Movement", p 678
- 57 Norman, Dorothy, Nehru II, p 121
- 58 Nicholas Mansergh, Transfer of Power, Vol II, p 213.
- 59 The Statesman, 1 November, 1942

## E I G H T

### **NINETEEN FORTY THREE—FORTY FIVE**

The Allied Military position had improved by the end of 1942 but the Japanese danger that the Japanese might invade India remained imminent.

On September 21, 1942, Russian forces repulsed the German at the gates of Stalingrad. On November 4, 1942, the British offensive proved successful against the Axis in Egypt. But in India, there was frustration and dis-appointment. There was complete deadlock in India. Seeing this lamentable affairs professor Laski issued his statement in this way : 'I don't think it is either legitimate or wise for the British Government to place the whole responsibility for the present deadlock on Mr. Gandhi.'<sup>1</sup> There was need of improvement in the Indian political situation. Hence Mr. Bernard Shaw authorised the publication of the following statement on his behalf in this way : 'You may quote me as declaring that the imprisonment of Gandhi is the stupidest blunder the Government has let itself be landed in by its right wing incurable die-hards. It and the unpardonable flogging business associated with it have

wiped out our moral case against Hitler. The King should release unconditionally as an act of grace unconnected with policy and apologise to him for the mental defectiveness of his Cabinet. That would do what is possible to save the Indian situation.”<sup>2</sup>

The Indian people also demanded the release of Mahatma Gandhi. The 24th session of the National Liberal Federation of India was held in Bombay under the Presidentship of Sir Maharaj Singh. The President suggested the release of Mahatma Gandhi. A resolution was passed urging the Government of India to release Congress leaders and asking the Congress to treat the August Resolution as a dead letter.<sup>3</sup>

### **Mahatma Gandhi's Fast**

Though the Indian people desired the release of Mahatma Gandhi and though Professor Laski and Mr. Bernard Shaw asked the Government to see wisdom in releasing Mahatma, the Government was adamant in her stand. There had been a correspondence between the Viceroy and Mahatma Gandhi from 14th August, 1942. Both held each other responsible for the August Rebellion of 1942. Gandhi wrote a letter to the Viceroy on December 31, 1942 in which he wrote that he would have to ‘crucify the flesh by fasting’ unless the Viceroy convinced him of his guilt. The Viceroy replied, ‘If I am right in reading your letter to mean that in the light of what has happened you wish to retrace your steps and dissociate yourself from the policy of last summer. You have only to let me know and I will at once consider the matter further.’<sup>4</sup> At the same time the Viceroy welcomed any positive suggestion from him.

Gandhi replied and placed the whole blame for the August rebellion at the door of the Government.

Linlithgow sent a personal letter to Gandhi dated January 25, 1943: ‘I made clear to you in my last letter that however reluctantly, the course of events and my familiarity with what has been taking place, has left me no choice but to regard the Congress movement and you as its authorised and fully

empowered spokesman at the time of the decision of last August, as responsible for the sad campaign of violence and crime and revolutionary activity which has done so much harm and so much injury to India's credit since last August. And I can not I fear accept as an answer your suggestion that the whole blame has been laid by you yourself at the door of the Government of India. We are dealing with facts in this matter and they have to be faced. If therefore you are anxious to inform me that you repudiate or associate yourself from the resolution of the 9th August and the policy which that resolution represents and if you can give me appropriate assurance as regards the future, I shall, I need not say, be very ready to consider the matter further.<sup>55</sup> Gandhi sent a letter to the Viceroy on June 29, 1943 informing him of his decision to fast. The letter ran in this way : 'I have pleaded and would continue to plead till the last breadth, that you should at least make an attempt to convince me of the validity of the opinion you hold that the August resolution of the Congress is responsible for the popular violence that broke out after the wholesale arrest of principal Congress workers. Was not the drastic and unwarranted action of the Government responsible for the murders as clearly, I hope, as you do. My answer is that the Government goaded the people to the point of madness. They started leonine violence in the shape of the arrests already referred to....If then I cannot get soothing balm for my pain, I must resort to the law prescribed for Satyagrahis namely a fast according to capacity—a fast for 21 days....usually during my fast, I take water with the addition to salts. But now-a-days my system refuses water. This time, therefore, I purpose to add juices of citrus to make water drinkable. For my wish is not to fast unto death, but to survive. The ordeal, if God so wishes. This fast can be ended sooner by the Government giving the needed relief.<sup>56</sup>

The Viceroy telegraphically informed the Secretary of State on February 1, 1943. He also consulted all provincial Governor of Gandhi's fast. He also sent a reply to Gandhi on February 5, 1943 : "...But in fact, the Government of India have never made any secret of their reasons for holding the

Congress and its leaders responsible for the deplorable acts of violence, sabotage and terrorism that have occurred since the Congress resolution of the 8th August declared a 'Mass Struggle' in support of its demands, appointed you as its leader and authorised all Congressman to act for themselves in the event of interference with the leadership of the movement. A body which passes a resolution in such terms is hardly entitled to disclaim responsibility for any events that followed it."

By minute 3 of W.M. (42) 121st conclusions dated the 7th September, 1942, the War Cabinet in Britain approved arrangements to be followed by the Indian authorities in the event of Gandhi declaring a fast. Briefly the intention was that he should not be released, but be informed that Government would not interfere, that he should be provided with all medical facilities, and allowed the company of his eldest son and visits from a limited number of friends from outside subject to such restrictions as would effectively limit his freedom to communicate with outside world. Under pressure of Lumley, the Governor of Bombay, the Viceroy felt obliged to revert to his view that Gandhi would be given his liberty as soon as his fast reached a danger point. But Gandhi declined to avail of the facility extended to him by the Viceroy and informed him accordingly. The Viceroy sent a reply telegram to Amery on February 9 informing him Gandhi's reply. The reply was as follows : 'If the temporary release is offered for my convenience, I do not need it. I shall be quite content to take my fast as a detenu or prisoner. If it is for the convenience of the Government, I am sorry I am unable to suit them, much as I should like to do so. I can say this much, that I as a prisoner shall avoid as far as is humanly possible every cause of inconvenience to the Government.

Gandhi's fast began on the morning of 10th February about 8 a.m. Indian time. This event had its effects on the Governor-General's Executive Council. Dr. M.S. Aney, Sir T.P. Srivastav, Sir Jogendra Singh and Sir Sultan Ahmad were unnerved at his fast. The British Government was absolutely confident that Gandhi would not survive the fast. So Amery

sent a telegram to Linlithgow on 16th February in this form : 'I should be interested to know whether in view of possibility of Gandhi's death you have thought it necessary to give any fresh guidance to Governors in matter of half-masting of flags and closing of courts. I should also be glad to learn whether in event of his death you would propose to make any statement as by G-G-in-Council or as from yourself'. Under mounting pressure of public opinion the Three Executive Councillors, Sir Homi Modi, Dr. M.S. Aney and Mr. N. Sarkar resigned on February 17.

Gandhi's fast had its repercussions on the working of the Central Legislature. Two adjournment motions were taken up for discussion in both houses on 15th February....Lumley, the governor of Bombay sent a report to Linlithgow on 16th February 1943 mentioning that Gandhi would probably not last longer than a further five days from February 16 and that the possibility of a sudden collapse cannot be excluded. He gave a hint that if there was any question of his release a decision could not be further delayed.<sup>8</sup> The Viceroy had this kind of misgiving that Gandhi might suffer heart attack. He had informed Amery on 16th February accordingly, in this way "The only thing I am afraid of is—given his terios clerosis, which was mentioned in one of the recent bulletins, a sudden heart attack. But he appears to be perfectly obstinate as regards any endeavour to alleviate his condition. He has refused suggestion by Dr. Gilder that he should take glucose, and seems insistant on submitting himself to the full rigour of the game "

The Government of India was absolutely confident that Gandhi would not be able to survive the fast. So Linlithgow sent a telegram to all Governors on 18th February about Gandhi's fast. The contents were as follows : "It has now been arranged that my Home Department, after consulting the Bombay Government will send all provincial Governments, Chief Commissioners and Political Residents a most immediate en Chair telegram containing the code word 'Rubicon' if death occurs....Bombay Government propose to allow a public

cremation, subject to such regulation in the matter of routes, place of cremation etc., as may be necessary to preserve order. I am clear that, considering Gandhi's position as our prisoner and a declared rebel, there can be no question of half-masting of flags or sending official messages of condolence to his widow.”<sup>9</sup>

The most peculiar thing was that Churchill, the British War-time Prime Minister did not believe the authenticity of his fast. So he sent a telegram to Linlithgow as early as February 14, to verify that Gandhi usually had glucose in his water when doing various fasting antics. The Viceroy sent a telegram in reply to the Prime Minister on February 15, 1943 and politely evaded the charge. The contents were as follows: ‘‘This may be the case but those who have been in attendance on him do but it and present Surgeon-General Bombay ( a European ) says that on a previous fast Gandhi was particularly careful to guard against possibility of glucose being used. I am told that his present medical attendants tried to persuade him to take glucose yesterday, and that he refused absolutely.’’<sup>10</sup>

Meanwhile the conference of leaders consisting of 19 persons was held at Delhi on 19th February, 1943 to consider the situation arising out of the Mahatma's fast. The conference appointed a committee to draft a resolution to be adopted by the conference. The conference adopted unanimously a resolution on February 20 and Sir T. B. Sapru sent a copy of the resolution to Sir G. Laithwaite, Private Secretary to the Viceroy. The resolution ran in this way : ‘‘This Conference representing different creeds, communities and interests in India, gives expression to the universal desire of this country that in the interests of the future of India and of international goodwill, Mahatma Gandhi should be released immediately and unconditionally. This Conference views with the gravest concern the serious situation that will arise if the Government fail to take timely action and prevent a catastrophe. This Conference, therefore, urges the government to release Mahatma Gandhi forthwith.’’<sup>11</sup> But the Government of India turned down this request in a reply sent to Sapru on February

20. Sapru further sent a telegram to Churchill on February 21 urging him immediate and unconditional release of Mahatma, whose condition was fast approaching a crisis. But Churchill did not agree with the view of Sapru. Amery sent to the Viceroy a reply from Churchill to be conveyed to Sapru. The telegram began, "The first duty of the Government of India and of H.M.G. is to defend the soil of India from the invasion by which it is still menaced, and to enable India to play her part in the general cause of the United Nations. There can be a justification for discriminating between Mr. Gandhi and other Congress leaders.<sup>12</sup>" Attlee also could not do anything though he felt that something should be done to save Gandhi's life. He sent a telegram to the Prime Ministers of Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa on Feb. 22 in this connection. The telegram began in this way : "You will have already gathered from press reports that Gandhi's condition has become increasingly serious. Fast is not yet reported to have reached a stage from which recovery is impossible, but heart action is effected and death might result at any time from heart failure. If death should occur Viceroy expects considerable emotional reaction and possibly a good deal of trouble but he is confident in light of replies so far received from Governors whom he is consulting that situation can be kept under control."

Churchill's doubt continued on Gandhi's authenticity of fast. He sent a telegram to the Viceroy on February 25 in this way : 'Can not help feeling very suspicious of bonafides of Gandhi's fast....Surely with all these Congress Hindu Doctors round him it is quite easy to slip glucose or other nourishment into his food.' Linlithgow sent a telegram to Churchill on Feb. 26 in this way without any direct or indirect evidence : 'I have long known Gandhi as the world's most successful humbug and have not the least doubt that his physical conditions and the bulletins reporting it from day to day have been deliberately looked so as to produce the maximum effect upon public opinion....There would be no difficulty in his ~~entourage~~ administering glucose or any other food without ~~the~~ knowledge of

the Government doctors." Thus Linlithgow supported Churchill's suspicion that Gandhi must have taken substantial food. Churchill, a die-hard conservative, sent a telegram to Linlithgow on February 28 using indecent language against Gandhi in this way: "It now seems almost certain that the old rascal will emerge all the better from his so-called fast....How foolish those cowardly ministers now look who ran away from a bluff and sole-stuff crisis."<sup>13</sup>

Gandhi broke the fast on March 3, 1943. Amery congratulated Linlithgow on his most successful deflation of Gandhi. Lumley, the Governor of Bihar sent a detailed report about his fast on March 4 in this way : 'When there seemed a possibility that Gandhi would die, I sent Bristow upto Poona to supervise the preparation of arrangement for the funeral and to take responsibility for any immediate decisions which might have to be made. Although eventuality did not arise, plans, so far as they could be made before the event were ready and will be useful if the contingency re-occurs. The main line, with which, you agreed, was to allow a public funeral.'<sup>14</sup>

### Continuance of Stalemate—Gandhi-Jinnah Correspondence

A Leader's Conference was held in Bombay on March 10 at Jayakar's residence presided by Sapru and attended by 25 persons including Jayakar, Rajagopalachari and Dr Mackenzie. They were of opinion that the deplorable events of the last few months require a reconsideration of their policy both by the Government and the Congress. The recent talks which some of them had with Gandhi, led them to believe that a move for reconciliation at the present juncture would bear fruit. It was their conviction that if Gandhi was set at liberty he would do his best to give guidance and assistance in the solution of the internal deadlock. It was decided by the conference that the Viceroy might be approached to permit a few representatives to meet Gandhi to authoritatively ascertain his reaction to the recent events and to explore with him avenues for reconciliation. But soon there was a difference. Rajagopalachari made a statement on March 14 suggesting that he was far from optimistic and international arbitration should be arranged for

the solution of the political deadlock. But the Viceroy did not like to release Gandhi. The Viceroy liked that the text of memorandum should be sent in advance. So on March 29 a memorandum was sent to Viceroy.

The continuance of stalemate in India drew a statement by Madame Chiang. She spoke on importance of freedom and necessity of liberating Nehru on April 14, 1942 in New York. She said that Nehru was a man of burning conviction, and world vision and that he was a true statesman. Further she said that Gandhi was somewhat cloudy in his thinking and had no world vision because he was overcome by his restricted obsession for India's freedom regardless of world conditions.<sup>15</sup>

The U.S.A. President, Roosevelt liked to break the Indian political deadlock. So he sent his personal representative William Philips to study the Indian political situation. He reached Delhi on January 8, 1943 and presented his credentials to the Viceroy. He met a large number of people and was impressed with the possibility of settling the Indian dispute by the immediate formation of a provisional government. He toured the Punjab in February 1943. He also met the Viceroy at Dehra Dun in April. He pressed him very strongly to be allowed to go to see Gandhi. But he was not permitted to meet him. After this he urged that some interim solution of the Indian problem should be found. He suggested that there might be a Prime Minister and self-government. Linlithgow also sounded him on Pakistan and reminded him that he personally stood to the idea of unity. Philips said that any alternative solution on the idea of separation would constitute in his judgment a most serious threat not merely to the peace of India and the East, but probably to that of the world as a whole. He had also met Jinnah. He held three and half hours talk with Jinnah. He listened to Jinnah's views on the creation of proposed Pakistan. It was reported that during the conversation Jinnah got up thrice and Philips stayed on. He left India on April 20, 1943. He did not succeed in his mission. It was regrettable that the State Department could not move effectively in this matter probably because of the necessity of

perserving the unity of Command during the crucial years of the war.

The situation was further complicated with the proceedings of the session of the All-India Muslim League at Delhi 24 to 26 April, 1943. By this time Jinnah had become more aggressive more challenging and more authoritative. In amplification of this point, Jinnah spoke to the Working Committee where he was able to expose his mind more freely. About the future, he said that there were two sets of suggestions: (1) to take direct action here and to force Britain to accept the Muslim demands, and (2) to wait and watch. Jinnah's assessment about post-war New World order that the end of this war would leave the Britisher more powerful than any of his allies, proved wrong. Further he extended an invitation to Gandhi to write to him by suggesting an interview.<sup>18</sup>

In response to Jinnah's invitation, Gandhi sent a letter to him on May 4, 1943. The letter was sent to Home Department to be dispatched to Jinnah. It was a great mistake on the part of Gandhi to address Jinnah as Qaid-e-Azam. This new title gave an additional prestige to Jinnah. The letter ran in this way : 'Dear Qaid-e-Azam. I welcome your invitation. I suggest our meeting face to face rather than talking through correspondence. But I am in your hands... Why should not both you and I approach the question of communal unity as men determined on finding a common solution and work together to make our solution acceptable to all who are concerned with it or are interested in it ?' This letter created a crisis whether it should be delivered to Jinnah or not. Linlithgow took a mild view and thought to pass this letter to Jinnah. He sent a telegram to Amery on May 13, 1943 justifying his stand that the letter should be sent to Jinnah. He said that there was no analogy between the forwarding to Jinnah of a reply from Gandhi to a public challenge or invitation by Jinnah and a request by irresponsible individuals such as Rajagopalachari or the members of the Bombay Conference to be allowed to see Gandhi or again an approach by Philips. He also admitted in the telegram that Jinnah was after all the leader of th-

second most important party in India. He concluded by saying that our settled policy had been not to stand in the way of anything that should reasonably facilitate advance towards a settlement. He expressed his desire to let Jinnah have Gandhi's letter.

The Secretary of State for India circulated the text of a letter which Gandhi had asked the Government of India to forward to Jinnah and the Viceroy's proposals on May 14 1943. The War Cabinet in its meeting held on May 18, 1943 considered the memorandum by the Secretary of State for India.<sup>17</sup> The Viceroy had recommended that the Government of India should forward this letter to Jinnah. The S/S for India took the view that the letter should not be forwarded and that no meeting between Gandhi and Jinnah should be allowed so long as Gandhi and the Congress party maintained their present policy.

The War Cabinet agreed that in present circumstances it would be inexpedient to allow Gandhi's letter to go forward, and a meeting to take place between Gandhi and Jinnah. So Amery sent a telegram on May 19 informing him of the decision of the War Cabinet that Gandhi's letter should not go forward. He was instructed that the ground given should be the simple one that the Government while most anxious to promote agreement between Hindus and Muslims and other political elements, were not prepared to give facilities for political correspondence or contact to a person in detention for promoting an illegal mass movement which he had not disavowed, thus gravely embarrassing India's war effort at a critical time.

This telegram of the Viceroy was discussed in the Viceroy's Executive Council on May 23, 1943 and after very considerable argument in which sharp differences of opinion was disclosed, the Governor-General managed to get Council to agree that the letter should not be forwarded and Gandhi and Jinnah should be so informed. Gandhi and Jinnah were informed accordingly.

There was mild reactions in the country at the Gandhi-Jinnah business. Meanwhile Jinnah issued a statement on May 29, 1943 that Gandhi and the Congress should come off their policy of last August before there can be any dealings between Gandhi and the Muslim league. The first disposition of the Muslim press and of Muslim politicians was to take a serious view of the Government's action in withholding Gandhi's letter. Nazimuddin thought that the Government committed a fatal blunder. The 'Hindustan Times' and the nationalist press were furious and divided their abuse between Jinnah, His Majesty's Government and the Viceroy. The one great result of this Gandhi-Jinnah correspondence was that Jinnah emerged as a much bigger man than one would have been prepared to anticipate.

### Lord Wavell as the New G.G.

The British War Cabinet had a very difficult task to find out Linlithgow's successor. Linlithgow was in India since 1936. He was most anxious to return to London. He had been pressing the British Government from January 1943 to select his successor. The revolutionary spirit was running high in the country. So the Government wanted an absolutely first class man to succeed him. After a great consideration Churchill, in a telegram of June 9, 1943 informed Linlithgow that Wavell would be his successor and Auchinleck as Commander-in-Chief in India. Linlithgow in a telegram of June 12, 1943 thanked him for appointing Wavell as his successor.

Lord Linlithgow's term ended on 20th October 1943. He lived here for 7½ years. Though he lived for a considerable period of time but he failed to solve the Indian problem.<sup>18</sup> His period was a barren one. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru expressed his feeling in this way : 'Today, I say, after seven years of Lord Linlithgow's administrations the country is much more divided than it was when he came here.'

Field Marshal Viscount Wavell succeeded him as Viceroy. He had been a military personnel. He was the Commander-in-Chief in the Government and he had repressed the August Rebellion with his dictatorial powers.

So it was believed that Lord Wavell would fail in solving the country's problem. But soon he rose to the occasion and he enunciated his policy through his Press Conference in this way:—‘There is certainly no intention to set up anything in the shape of military rule or to withdraw or weaken in any way the pledges and offers already made to India by His Majesty's Government.’

Lord Wavell made attempts to solve the problem. He liked to create conditions for the transfer of power to Indians. But there were great difficulties on the way. The communal problem had not been solved. Jinnah had now invented a new slogan “Divide and Quit”. The All-India Hindu Mahasabha opposed Jinnah's stand and demanded the preservation of the integrity of India. National Liberal Federation desired the release of the Congress leaders.

Lord Wavell enunciated his new policy through his address, which he made to the Joint Session of the Central legislature on February 7th, 1944. He said : ‘The winning of the war is our first task, but it must not exclude preparation for the future’. He declared that His Majesty's Government desired to see a prosperous and united India. On the problem of Indian unity, he said: ‘You cannot alter geography . India is a natural unit’. Of the Congress, Lord Wavell said : ‘I recognize how much ability and high mindedness it contains, but I deplore its present policy and methods as barren and unpractical. I should like to have the co-operation of this element in solving the present and future problems of India. If its leaders feel that they cannot consent to take part in the present Government of India, they may still be able to assist in considering future problems.’ But those responsible for the declaration of 8 August, 1942 (the ‘Quit India’ resolution) could not be released till the policy of non-co-operation and obstruction’ not in sack-cloth and ashes that helps no one—but in recognition of a mistaken and unprofitable policy.<sup>19</sup>

Jinnah did not appreciate Viceroy's interpretation of Indian unity. It was told by the Muslim League office; ‘This drawing in of geography without reference to history and psychology is a poor compliment to Lord Wavell's gift of statesmanship.’

At this time an unhappy episode occurred. Mrs. Kasturba Gandhi passed away at 7.30 p.m. on the 22nd February 1944 at the Aga Khan Palace, Bombay.<sup>20</sup>

Constant attempts were made to resolve the present deadlock. A non-party Conference was held at Lucknow with Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru in the chair. The Conference passed a number of resolutions recommending the restoration of Ministerial Government in the section 93 provinces; the reconstruction of the Governor-General's Executive Council as a truly national Government with a Prime Minister; the release of the Congress leaders, and elections to the Conference. The Conference also submitted a memorandum to the Viceroy. The Viceroy replied that the suspension of the Constitution was due to the refusal of the majority party to remain in office.

In the middle of April 1944 Gandhi had an attack of Malaria and he was released on May 6, at 8 p. m. on medical ground. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya on his release said (8th May) : 'I am greatly relieved to learn that Mahatma Gandhi has been released unconditionally. He ought not have been arrested at all and the Government have set right a grave act of injustice.'<sup>21</sup>

On 17th June, Gandhi wrote to the Viceroy expressing a desire to interview members of the Congress Working Committee but the Viceroy refused permission. For sometime after his release, Gandhi was too ill to take any effective step. After a little gap, Gandhi made a fresh attempt for a understanding with the Muslim League. He also issued a statement that if India were declared free, she would voluntarily side with the British and give full support to the war effort. The Viceroy replied that independence could not be granted to India unless a Constitution was framed by the main elements of India's national life. Commenting on the Viceroy's reply, Gandhi said that it was "as clear as crystal that the British Government did not propose to give up the power they possess over the four hundred millions unless the latter develop strength enough to wrest it from them."<sup>22</sup>

**Notes**

1. The Indian Annual Register, 1943, I, p. 491.
2. Ibid., p. 57.
3. The Indian Annual Register, 1943, I, p. 31.
4. Quoted in V.P. Menon's book Transfer of Power, p. 146
5. Nicholas Mansergh, Transfer of Power, II, pp. 535-36.
6. Ibid., pp. 558-559.
7. Ibid., Vol. II, p. 580.
8. Ibid., Vol. II, p. 672.
9. Ibid., pp. 684-86.
10. Ibid., Vol. II p. 669.
11. Ibid., p. 705.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid., Vol. II, p. 754.
14. Ibid., p. 760.
15. Ibid., Vol. III, p. 904.
16. Ibid., Colville to Linlithgow, Ibid., Vol. III, p. 947.
17. War Cabinet Proceedings, Ibid., Vol. III.
18. Quoted in V.P. Menon's book, Transfer of Power, p 151.
19. Ibid., p. 154.
20. The Indian Annual Register, 1944 I, p. 31.
21. Ibid., p. 53.
22. Quoted in V.P. Menon, Transfer of Power p. 162.

## NINE

### THE GANDHI-JINNAH TALKS OR NEGOTIATIONS

Finding no response from the Viceroy to solve the political and Constitutional problem of the country, Gandhi turned towards Jinnah. Since April 1941, Rajagopalachari had been thinking over the issue of Pakistan. He had come to this conclusion that the present deadlock could be solved only; when any agreement was made with the Muslim League. He had prepared a scheme, which was called Rajagopalachari's formula.<sup>1</sup> Gandhi saw this formula after his release. He had communicated the formula to Jinnah also. It was published on 10th July. The terms of the formula were that the Muslim League should endorse the demand for independence and co-operate with the Congress in the formation of a provisional interim government for the transitional period; after the termination of the war, a Commission should be appointed to demarcate those contiguous districts in north-west and north-east India wherein the Muslims were in absolute majority, and in those areas there should be a plebiscite of all the inhabitants to decide the

issue of separation from Hindustan; if the majority decided in favour of forming a separate sovereign state, such decision should be given effect to. It would be open to all the parties to advocate their points of view before the plebiscite was held. In the event of separation, a mutual agreement should be entered into for defence, commerce, communications and other essential purposes. Any transfer of population would be on an absolutely voluntary basis.

Gandhi tried to arrange a talk with Jinnah. So he wrote a letter to Jinnah on May 4, 1943; 'Why should not both you and I approach the great question of communal unity of men determined on finding a common solution and work together, to make one solution workable to all concerned who are interested in it.'<sup>2</sup> At last Jinnah agreed and invited Gandhi to come to Bombay at his house.

The Gandhi-Jinnah negotiations which were carried on since September 9, 1944 broke down on September 27. The important reasons for its failure were that the two leaders could not agree on two-nations theory, plebiscite and other issues. The main point at issue appeared to be the question of plebiscite. While the Raja's formula insisted on a plebiscite before Pakistan was brought into being Mr. Jinnah was understood to be determined on Muslims having the right to Pakistan without a plebiscite. Hence it could be said that the talk failed on the issue of Pakistan.<sup>3</sup>

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad commented on the Gandhi-Jinnah negotiations in this way : 'Gandhi's approach to Jinnah on this occasion was a great political blunder. It gave a new and added importance to Mr. Jinnah which he later exploited to the full... Mr. Jinnah had lost much of his political importance after he left the Congress in the twenties. It was largely due to Gandhi's acts of Commission and omission that Mr. Jinnah regained his importance in Indian political life.'<sup>4</sup> According to Nehru's political biographer : 'The talks strengthened the League; they enhanced Jinnah's prestige and gave him a status of virtual equality with Gandhi. The Sikhs and the Hindu Mahasabha were jubilant at the failure of the talks. These two sections did not like Gandhi-Jinnah's negotiation.

Savarkar had asserted that 'The Indian provinces were not the private properties of Gandhiji and Rajaji so that they could make a gift of them to anyone they liked.'

### Wavell's Initiative

After the breakdown of Gandhi-Jinnah's negotiations, the Viceroy came to this conclusion that unless the British Government would intervene to solve the Indian problem, there was no likelihood that the Indian situations would improve. So he called a Conference of Governors in August 1944. This Conference agreed that certain positive moves should be made to bring an improvement in the Indian political condition. Encouraged by this Conference, the Viceroy made a plan to call a Conference of the principal leaders of the country. But his plan was not approved by the Secretary of State. He suggested an alternative plan, that is, expansion of the National Defence Council. But Wavell thought that the expansion of National Defence Council would not serve the purpose because the Congress and the Muslim League would be by-passed. Soon the Secretary of State revised his earlier plan and he came to this conclusion that independence was the only solution of the Indian political situation. But how was that possible ? The British Government was presided over by Churchill and unless Churchill agreed to part with power, there was no prospect of solution of the problem. So the Viceroy wrote a letter to Mr. Churchill, the British Prime Minister. He suggested in the letter that a Conference of political leaders should be called. The matter was discussed by the British Cabinet and the Viceroy was called to London for personal discussion. Meanwhile an attempt had been made by Bhulabhai and Liaquat Ali Khan for a Congress-League alliance. It was known as 'Bhulabhai Desai's plan.' Later it was called Desai-Liaquat Ali pact. But Jinnah turned down this pact. The Sapru Committee did not meet with any success.

Now the Viceroy proceeded for London and he reached there on the evening of March 23, 1945. His talk started with the British Cabinet. The Cabinet accepted of the Viceroy's plan of a conference. It was agreed that all political parties of the

country would be represented in the Conference. It was further agreed that all persons should be released unconditionally. After his talk was over, he came to New Delhi on June 4.

Meanwhile an important event had taken place in Britain and in the world. Germany had been defeated in the war and her unconditional surrender became effective on May 8-9. The second important event that took place was the resignation of Winston Churchill during May 1945. He remained in office until after the July election, Clement Attlee became Prime Minister.

### Fresh British Proposals

Lord Wavell announced his plan on June 14, 1945. These proposals were announced for Indian Constitutional change within the framework of the 1935 Government of India Act. It was announced that the British Government would be prepared to see an important change in the composition of the Viceroy's Executive. The Executive Council would be reconstituted and that the Viceroy would in future make his selection for nomination to the Crown for appointment to his Executive from amongst leaders of Indian political life at the Centre and in the Provinces, in proportions which would give a balanced representation of the main communities, including equal proportions of Moslems and caste Hindus. It was announced further that the Viceroy would call into Conference a number of leading Indian politicians who were the heads of the most important parties or who have had recent experience as Prime Ministers of provinces, together with a few others of special experience and authority.<sup>5</sup>

As Prof. Michael Breacher has noted of the Wavell proposals, "By a slight change of terminology, political parity, which the Congress (had) never officially accepted, was transformed into communal parity, a tactical objective of the league and was incorporated into the official statement of British policy. The (Wavell) proposals, which were not an attempt to obtain or impose a Constitutional settlement 'were to be discussed at a Conference of representative political leaders in

Simla on 25 June'. To ease Congress acceptance of the invitation, all members of the Working Committee (But no other Congress prisoner) were to be released (from Jail) immediately.\*

Immediately after the broadcast, the Viceroy sent invitations to all the political leaders, including Gandhi, Jinnah and later on Azad. The members of the Congress Working Committee were released on 15 June. About a week later, the Working Committee met in Bombay to consider the Wavell pronouncement before the Simla Conference was convened. The British Government invitation to Simla was accepted by the Congress Working Committee. But a Muslim League claim to the right to appoint all Muslim members of the Executive Council (to be set up) was clearly rejected by Congress in advance.

### Notes

1. The Indian Annual Register, 1944, I, p. 111.
2. Ibid., p. 54.
3. Ibid., II, p. 21.
4. Azad, M.A.K., India Wins Freedom, p. 93.
5. Norman Dorothy, Nehru, II, p. 163
6. Brecher, Michael, Nehru, p. 301.

## THE SIMLA CONFERENCE, JUNE 1945

Lord Wavell, Viceroy and Governor-General, made yet another attempt to solve the Constitutional deadlock after the failure of the Cripps Mission and the August movement of 1942. The new Governor-General came with the good intention of practical business-like mind. He handled the famine situation in Bengal in a practical and humanitarian spirit.

It was due to his initiative that the Simla Conference met on 25th June. Twenty-one persons were invited to Simla : the eleven provincial premiers, most of whom were appointees of the Viceroy because of the resignation of the Congress Ministries in 1939; the Congress and League leaders in the Central Assembly and the Council of State; the leaders of the insignificant Nationalist Party and the European Group in the Assembly; one delegate each for the untouchables and the Sikhs; and Gandhi and Jinnah as the recognised leaders of the two main political parties. Conspicuously missing was an invitation to the (Muslim) President of the Congress, Maulana Azad. Gandhi declined on the ground that this was an official

Conference and he was not even a member of the Congress. However, he agreed to go to Simla as an observer, in response to the Viceroy's persistent request. He also gently reminded Wavell that Azad was the official Congress spokesman and the 'error' was duly rectified.<sup>1</sup>

The Conference met at 11 a.m. on 25th June. The Viceroy made a short address.

He told : 'The statesmanship is here on trial, not merely in the eyes of India but before the whole world.' He asked them to believe in him as a sincere friend of India and as one who would labour hard to guide the discussions of the Conference in what he believed to be the best interests of the country. The Viceroy and Sir Evan Jenkins acted as Secretaries to the Conference. Soon the Conference met with difficulty. The League insisted on the right to appoint all Muslims to the Executive Council and the Congress refused to abdicate its status as a national organisation. Conversation took place between Jinnah and Pandit G.B. Pant, but the deadlock continued.

Accordingly Lord Wavell intervened and he put a new proposal before the Conference. He told that the reason of the present deadlock was parity or arithmetical formula as desired by both major parties. Hence he proposed a different approach. He requested both parties to submit lists of persons for the proposed Executive Council. Jinnah sought a prior assurance that the five Muslims nominated by the League would be accepted enbloc, but Wavell did not give this assurance to Jinnah. By 7th July all groups except the league had complied.

Lord Wavell further tried to break the deadlock. He talked with Jinnah on the 8th on these points. He sent a letter to Mr. Jinnah on the 9th which he made it clear that he could not give any guarantee to the Muslim League that the Muslim members would be selected exclusively from the League's list. But Jinnah refused to co-operate with the Viceroy.

In the meanwhile Lord Wavell received list of names from the other delegates. He met Jinnah on the afternoon of 11th July and told him that he was prepared to include four members

of the Muslim League, but that the fifth place would have to go to a Punjabi Muslim, who did not belong to the League. Jinnah said at once that it was impossible for the Muslim League to co-operate unless all five Muslim members of the Council were taken from the League. The Viceroy refused to accept this condition. He had a discussion on this point with Sir Francis Mudie, Sir Evan Jenkins and V. P. Menon.

On 11th July, the Viceroy met Gandhiji and said that the Conference had failed. On 12th July the Viceroy explained the position to Khizr Hyat Khan, Maulana Azad and Govind Ballabh Pant. These leaders did not appreciate the policy of the Muslim League.

At the fifth and last session of the Conference on 14th July, the Viceroy made statement in which he accepted full responsibility for the failure of the discussions. He said in the end in this way : 'I thank you for the help you have given me, and for the restraint, patience and understanding which you have shown. Do not any of you be discouraged by this setback. We shall overcome our difficulties in the end. The future greatness of India is not in doubt.'<sup>2</sup>

There were two causes of failure of the Simla Conference according to the Viceroy's explanation. Jinnah threatened to boycott the Executive Council unless his demands were met and the Viceroy acquiesced in this demand. The Conference failed also because he allowed Jinnah to veto its decisions, a precedent that strengthened Jinnah's hand subsequently. The League claim to represent all Muslims at that time was dubious; of the four Muslim-majority provinces, the North-West Frontier was under Congress control, the Punjab was Governed by the Unionists and Sind dependent on Congress. support for a stable ministry.<sup>3</sup>

Jinnah speaking on the failure of the Conference observed. "on a final examination and the analysis of the Wavell plan, we found that it was a snare. There was the combination consisting of Gandhi and Hindu Congress, who stand for India's Hindu national independence as one India and the latest exponent of geographical unity. Lord Wavell and Glancy

and Khizr, who are bent upon creating disruption among the Muslims in the Punjab, and we were sought to be pushed into this arrangement, which, if we had agreed to, as proposed by Lord Wavell, we should have signed our death-warrant.”<sup>4</sup>

Maulana Azad said that he appreciated Lord Wavell’s efforts for a solution of the political deadlock. He further said that a firm attitude on the part of the Viceroy alone could bring about a settlement of the communal problem. The Viceroy’s present wavering attitude was not helpful. “We are very near our goal” he said, “and the next stage is the goal itself. It does not matter at all what the intentions of the British Government are.”

After Jinnah’s statement, Dr. Jayakar wrote to Gandhi in this way; ‘As I read this speech, where he called the Wavell arrangement a snare, it was clear to me that his apprehension (was) that.. if he accepted the interim arrangement...in the day-to-day harmony of working the acerbities and animosities, out of which Pakistan is born and fed, would be gradually smoothed and Muslims would lose the zest for separate existence on discovering that its basis rests not in realities but only in long suspicion.’

The net result of the Conference was to introduce the formula of “caste—Hindu-Muslim parity” into practical politics and to strengthen the principle of religious division on the eve of independence.

It is said that Lord Wavell was true and sincere friend of India and he had tried his best to ease the Indian political situation. Leonard Mosley also holds the same view. He has mentioned in his book “The last days of the British Raj” that Lord Wavell had made sincere attempts to bring improvement in the political condition of the country. How far this is true? This becomes clear if we study the question and answer of Francis Sayer and Gandhi. “You will admit” remarked Mr. Francis Sayer of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration in the course of an interview with Gandhi, “that Wavell did make an honest attempt to break the deadlock.”

"An honest attempt should have ended honestly" Gandhi replied. The situation became more clear after a fortnight, when Pandit Nehru received a letter from London. It had been mentioned in the letter "It is now known that the Wavell offer was maintained in being as part of election necessities."

### **Wavell and the Indian Constitutional deadlock—An Appraisal**

When Lord Wavell took over the Viceroyalty from Lord Linlithgow in September 1943, the political dead-lock seemed complete. The retiring Viceroy told Wavell that no progress in the constitutional field was possible while Mahatma Gandhi lived and Britain would have to continue the responsibility for India for at least "30 years." The British Government, headed by Sir Winston Churchill, was not likely to allow the British hold on India to be relaxed. Indeed, the appointment of a soldier Viceroy—in preference to a senior politician like Mr. Anthony Eden, who was seriously considered for the post—may have been intended as a clear hint that the British premier proposed to keep the Indian Constitution problem in deep freeze for the duration of the war.

Curiously enough, the soldier-Viceroy revealed greater political wisdom and courage than his superiors in London or subordinates in India. Even before he took charge in New Delhi, Wavell tried to get the green signal for initiating discussions with Indian political leaders on the constitutional question but he was overruled.

As Viceroy-designate in September 1943, Wavell submitted a lengthy memorandum recommending the establishment of a coalition government at the centre by direct appeal to the principal party leaders, not immediately but when suitable opportunity arose. Before leaving, he said, "I must be clear about the main aim of our policy in India. I shall be expected shortly after my arrival, to say what line I intend to take and I cannot maintain silence indefinitely."

Britain's ultimate aim, he said, should be that as soon as possible after the War, India would become independent. Deferences to dominion status had long been a stumbling block

to Indian politicians and "if our intention is that India should have the right to secede from the British Commonwealth we may as well say so directly."

In his opinion, Britain's immediate aim should have been to introduce a government composed of the leaders of the war period. He said he did not believe that if Britain adhered to the present policy of inaction "we can make any real progress towards our ultimate aim."

The War Cabinet's Committee on India, with Mr. Clement Attlee (Deputy Prime Minister) to the Chair, advised with one dissenting voice, the adoption of the course suggested by Lord Wavell. But the Prime Minister, Churchill, argued that there could hardly be a less suitable time for raising the issue and for trying to do business with Gandhi. The injury to the war effort and to the internal peace of India might be most grievous, he argued, and "the fact that a new Viceroy is going out to India affords no reason for running such risks."

So the Cabinet on October 7, 1943 approved a directive to the Viceroy telling him : 'Your first duty is the defence of India from Japanese menace and invasion.' The directive discouraged political initiatives on the part of the Viceroy. It was in this atmosphere that Wavell began his term of office on October 20, 1943.

The British had seemingly accepted the growing strength of the Muslim League as a significant factor in the Indian political scene. By contrast, the Congress, its leaders interned, had little freedom of manoeuvre. Yet as Bombay's Governor, Sir John Colville, noted the Congress could not be conjured away but would have to be reckoned with when the time come for British commitments to India to be fulfilled after the war.

The Governor of the Central Provinces, Sir Henery Twynam, however, advised that no further appeasement of the Congress be attempted, a firm stand be taken on the principles of the Cripps offer and an attempt be made to win over the Muslim League.

In April 1944 a new factor was introduced into the political equation. A proposal was made by the government of India

that the Cabinet should assent to Mahatma Gandhi's transfer from the Aga Khan Palace, Poona to Ahmednagar. But a sudden deterioration in his health persuaded the Viceroy to release him immediately. The Home Department's interpretation of the doctor's opinion was that Gandhiji never likely to be active factor in politics again. The Cabinet acquiesced Mr. Churchill noting "it is of course understood that there will be no negotiations between him (Gandhi) and the Viceroy."

When Gandhi, soon after his release, offered full co-operation in the War effort if a declaration of immediate independence were made and a national government formed, the Viceroy felt that his reply should go beyond blank refusal and give the impression that the government was anxious to promote a settlement. He sent a draft on these lines to the Secretary of State, Mr. L. S. Amery, for approval by the Cabinet. But Churchill tersely informed the Viceroy : "We are much concerned at the negotiation which you have got into with Gandhi who was released on the medical advice that he would not again be able to take part in active politics."

The Cabinet amended the Viceroy's draft in substance and introduced an explicit reference to the need of the British government "to ensure fulfilment of their duty to safeguard the interests of the racial and religious minorities and of the depressed classes and their treaty obligations to the Indian states." Lord Wavell raised objections to the revised draft on the ground that it would destroy hopes of ending the political deadlock. Mr. Amery replied that the Cabinet was overcome by the Prime Minister's vehemence and that the Prime Minister made difficulties because he passionately hopes that any solution involving the fulfilment of our pledges can still somehow or other be prevented.

On July 18, 1943 Lord Wavell despatched a telegram to the Secretary of State saying : "It would be great help if Prime Minister could be induced to make a positive statement of our intention to help India to self-government as soon as possible and if India could be reassured that her sterling balances will be honoured." Mr. Amery wired back : "I am afraid there is

no prospect of the Prime Minister making a statement at present nor if he did would it be likely to be helpful on either point."

Lord Wavell was unhappy. "I am sorry" he cabled to Mr. Amery, "Prime Minister will not make statement. There is great lack of confidence in His Majesty's government's good faith in dealing with political problem and question of sterling balances seems to have been handled largely in such a way as to increase Indian suspicious."

A week earlier the Viceroy had written to the Secretary of State to inform him of the two sensations concerning Gandhi. One was the publication of recent correspondence between Mr. C. Rajagopalachari and Mr. Jinnah and the other was caused by Drew Pearson's assertion in a New York paper that American people did not yet know how President Mr. Roosevelt had been patient with Churchill. Mr. Roosevelt had written to Mahatma Gandhi in 1942 and his letter has been withheld by the government of India. He had later been rebuffed by Mr. Churchill when he had made suggestions about Indian affairs. After this event he wrote in his diary about the members of the Indian Committee of the War Cabinet that "I do not believe these men face their fences honestly. They profess their anxiety to give India self-government but will take no risk to make it possible."

Not daunted with the step-motherly policy of the Home Government, Lord Wavell raised the subject again with it in October 1944. Though things seemed quiet on the surface, he said that the British could not "sit pretty." In a candid almost blunt communication to Churchill, he pointed out that "practically all educated in India was suffering from a sense of frustration and discontent, that the members of the Civil Service were tired and depressed, that an imaginative and constructive move towards political reconciliation was imperative if India was to face the stupendous problems of the post-war period and to remain in the British Commonwealth as an equal and willing partner."

The failure of the Gandhi-Jinnah talks in September 1944 seemed rule out for the time being the possibility of an

agreement between the Congress and the League on the main constitutional issue. "My own belief" he wrote to Mr. Richard Casey, the Governor of Bengal on November 1, 1944 "is that in the long run, the Muslim League may accept some loose form of federation." A month later, Wavell told Mr. Jinnah that "a strong and united India would make a very great contribution to the peace of the East and of the whole world, while a disunited India, possibly engaged in an internal struggle, would be a menace to the peace of the whole world."

He urged him to shelve the communal problem and the question of partition for sometime and to co-operate in a provisional government at the centre for solving the urgent problems of the country. "While this was being done" Lord Wavell added "the two communities would get to realise one another's point of view better and it might be possible to arrive at a solution of the constitutional problem by consent." Mr. Jinnah's response to this feeler was encouraging, the difficulty, he told the Viceroy, would be in getting the Congress to agree.

Lord Wavell's proposal for an executive council consisting of representatives of Indian political parties and except for the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief, wholly Indian in composition, although working within the existing constitution, caused a flutter in the India Office in London. Secretary of State Amery's advisers regarded it as an act of "appeasement" of sheer "defeatism" a risky "gamble". Mr. Amery himself was not entirely against the reconstitution of the council, but wanted to exclude both the Congress and the League. The India Committee of the war cabinet, which included Lord Attlee, Sir Stafford Cripps, Sir John Simon and Sir John Anderson, was highly sceptical. Churchill, of course, was allergic to any scheme which could lead to the British being "kicked out of India."

Dismayed by the inordinate delay in getting a decision from London and fearing that the psychological moment for action would pass, Lord Wavell insisted on flying home to explain his proposals. Churchill held him off as long as he could, but the Viceroy's strongly-worded, almost rude protests

wrung reluctant assent from him. He stayed in London for ten weeks. During this period he was summoned for discussion by the Secretary of State, the India Committee of the war cabinet and finally the war cabinet. For a time it seemed as if he would have to go back to India empty-handed.

Meanwhile, after the end of the war with Germany, the war-time Conservative-Labour coalition came to an end and an exclusively Conservative cabinet headed by Sir Winston was in office preparatory to a general election. Almost at the last moment the fear that the Labour party might exploit the Indian issue during the election seems to have made Churchill relent. Lord Wavell was authorised to return to India to launch his proposal for a provisional government.

The opening of the Simla Conference on June 25, 1945 was preceded by the release of the members of the Congress Working Committee. Lord Wavell had feared the conference might be wrecked by the 'two principals' Mahatma Gandhi and Mr. Jinnah. Mahatma Gandhi was present at Simla (though not at the conference table) but he and the Congress were on the whole, in Lord Wavell's own words, "Conciliatory and reasonable".

It was Mr Jinnah whom Lord Wavell found intractable. Thus almost the opening day of the conference, he refused to make any commitment on whether the Muslim League would take part in the conference or not. At the conference itself, he insisted on the absolute right of the Muslim League to nominate all Muslim members of the executive council. He would not accept even a non-Congress Muslim from the Unionist Party which was in power in the Punjab. Not content with the artificial parity between 'caste Hindus' and Muslims in the proposed executive council, he demanded that, in the event of any objection from Muslim members, decisions in the executive council would be by a two-thirds majority. "I said" Lord Wavell recorded "that this was quite unacceptable and was contrary to all principles of government."

The "root cause" of the failure of the conference, Lord Wavell wrote to King George VI on July 19, 1945, was.

"Jinnah's intransigence and obstinacy". As I have already discussed, in December 1944, Mr. Jinnah had seemed willing to enter a provisional government at the centre. One can only speculate on the reasons for the change in his stand. The readiness of the Congress to come into the interim government seems to have intrigued and disturbed him. He may have also sensed that the Viceroy was opposed to the partition of India, and so were several British Governors, especially Mr. Richard Casey of Bengal and Mr. Bertrand Glancy of the Punjab. Mr. Jinnah also knew that the tremendous rise of the Muslim League during the war years had largely been due to the political vacuum created by the ruthless suppression of the Congress especially after 1942.

With the release of Mahatma Gandhi on grounds of health, the slow revival of Congress activity and the obvious British desire for a political thaw, the ground could well slip from under Mr. Jinnah's feet. Already, the League ministries in Bengal and the NWFP had fallen and the League ministries in Sind and Assam survived precariously on the sufferance of the Congress legislators. Some of the provincial leaders of the League, therefore, favoured a compromise; even Nawabzade Liaquat Ali was reported to be anxious to take office in the provisional government.

At Simla, Mr. Jinnah seemed to be unusually tense and unsure. "I am at the end of my tether" he told Lord Wavell. But finally he screwed up courage and decided to take an uncompromising line. A few months earlier he had rebuffed Mahatma Gandhi at the well-publicised Bombay talks, treated Mr. Sapru's non-party conference with contempt by Mr. Bhulabhai Desai and Mr. Liaquat Ali to reach an understanding between the Congress.

In July 1945, Mr. Jinnah almost single-handed blocked Lord Wavell's plan—a plan for which the Viceroy had laboured for eight months. It was the moment of truth for Lord Wavell. Mr. Colville, the governor of Bombay, told him that if "Jinnah was confronted with the certainty of the government being formed without the League, it would come in". But Lord Wavell,

who had braved the displeasure of Churchill chose not to stand to the Qaid-e-Azam.

“An interim government” Lord Wavell had confined to the governor of the Punjab “might help to dissuade the Muslims from the Pakistan objective.” Evidently this possibility was not welcome to Mr. Jinnha. By 1945, Pakistan had ceased to be a bargaining counter for Mr. Jinnah, if indeed it ever was. He was afraid that the League entry into an interim central government could prejudice his case for a separate state.

If the Viceroy had mustered the courage to override Mr. Jinnah’s objections and gone ahead with the reconstitution of his executive council, it is not impossible that the League leader might have fallen in line.

Thus the Simla ‘Conference failed. But Lord Wavell’s sincerity, integrity, sense of fairness had remarkable freedom from imperialist blinkers must be admired. But at the same time he had a pathological suspicion and dislike of politicians—especially Indian politicians, Mr. Jinnah struck him as “too narrow and intransigent”. Mahatma Gandhi too “tortuous and prolix”, Mr. Nehru “Theoretical,” Maulana Azad “ineffective” and Sir Sapru “intolerant”. The fact is that Lord Wavell himself lacked the agility, flexibility and bonhomie needed in those critical years for the difficult task of healing the communal cleavage and creating a bridge to a united and self-governing India.

### The General Election

After the breakdown of the Simla Conference there came a sweeping change in the political outlook. Two events transformed the entire scene after the Conference. The first was the sweeping victory of Labour in Britain and the second was the dropping of the atom bomb at the end of the war. The General election in Britain resulted in a victory of the Labour Party. The Conservatives were defeated and the Labour came into power on July 26. Lord Pethick Lawrence, who was an old friend of Gandhi, became the new Secretary of State for India.

Congratulating him on his appointment, Gandhi wrote : "If the India Office is to receive a decent burial and a nobler monument is to rise from its ashes, who can be a fitter person than you for the work." Lord Pethick Lawrence replied : "I greatly hope that our personal friendship, which has existed for so many years, may bear fruit in harmonious co-operation in achieving the lasting good of India and her people."<sup>5</sup> In a cable to Attlee, the new Prime Minister, the Congress President said : "Hearty Congratulations to the people of Great Britain on the results of the election which demonstrate their abandonment of the old ideas and acceptance of a new world."

The surrender of Japan was the result of the atom bomb. The first atomic bomb to be utilized for war purposes was dropped by a U.S. B-29 plane on Hiroshima, Japan, on August 6, 1945. On August 8, Russia declared war on Japan. The second atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, Japan, August 9. Now Japan surrendered unconditionally.

The new Labour Government invited Lord Wavell to London in the last week of August, in order to review the whole Indian problem. At the same time the announcement was made on August 21, that the general election to the Central and the Provincial legislatures would be held at the earliest possible. Lord Wavell returned to India soon and an announcement was made on the 19th September to the following effect : provincial autonomy would be resorted immediately after the elections; a Constitution-Making body for India would be established as soon as possible.

The Viceroy's Executive Council would be reconstituted in consultation with the principal Indian parties.

A meeting of the All-India Congress Committee commenced in Bombay on September 21 to consider the Viceroy's new proposals. Maulana Azad presided and 283 members participated and more than 25,000 people were present there to witness the proceedings. Sardar Patel then moved the Working Committee resolution on Lord Wavell's speech. The resolution characterised his proposals as "Vague inadequate and unsatisfactory." It condemned Wavell's proposals because

they left a corrupt and incompetent administration in power for many months more and regarded it as proof of the desire to hold on to power.

The last part of the resolution said that nevertheless the Congress would contest the election to demonstrate the will of the people on the issue of immediate transfer of power.

The Congress agreed to participate in the elections, though with some misgivings. 'There is little difference between Conservative Churchill and Laborite Attlee.' In October the Congress High Command issued a 12-point election manifesto. The Muslim League fought the elections on the issue of Hindu domination in a united India and the consequent need of a separate Muslim homeland, i.e. Pakistan. The results were astonishing. The League won all 30 Muslim seats in the Central Assembly, with 86 per cent of the Muslim vote, and 427 of the 507 Muslim seats in the provincial legislatures, with 74 per cent of the Muslim vote. The Muslim League got defeat in North-West Frontier Province. The Congress captured 56 seats in the Central Assembly, with 91 per cent of the 'General' vote and 930 in the provinces. The trend to polarization was now evident; the Congress had paid a high price for the 'August Revolt'. All other groups faded into insignificance.

As a result, the Congress formed Ministries in 8 out of 11 provinces, and in the 9th namely, the Punjab it entered into a coalition with the Unionist Party which cut across communal alignments. The Muslim League was able to form Ministries in Bengal and Sindh.

The stage was now set for the reconstitution of the Viceroy's Executive Council and the convening of a Constituent Assembly. The British Government decided this time not to leave the work of negotiating a settlement of the Indian question in the hands of the Viceroy alone. On 19th February, 1946 it was announced in the British Parliament that a mission consisting of three Cabinet Ministers would shortly proceed to India in order, in association with the Viceroy, to give effect to the programme outlined in the Viceregal announcement of September, 1945. (The Viceroy in a broadcast of September 19, 1945, authorised:

by the British Government, stated : "It is the intention of His Majesty's Government to convene as soon as possible a Constitution-Making body, and as a preliminary step they have authorised me to undertake, immediately after the elections, discussions with representatives of the legislative Assemblies in the provinces to ascertain in whether the proposals contained in the 1942 declaration are acceptable or whether some alternative or modified scheme is preferable."

### Notes

1. Brecher, Michael, Nehru, pp 301-302.
2. Menon, V.P. Quoted in V.P. Menon's book *Transfer of Power*. p. 209.
3. Brecher, Michael, Nehru, pp. 302-303.
4. Tendulkar, Mahatma, VII, pp. 10-11.
- \* This Chapter is based on the Transfer of Power, Vol. IV and V: edited by Nicholas Mansergh and Penderel Moon, from June 15, 1943 to July 1945, London 1975.
5. Pyarelal, Mahatma, I, p 151.

# **Part IV**

## ONE

### 'THE INDIAN NATIONAL ARMY—FOUNDATION AND TRIAL

The middle of February, 1942, was indeed historic. On the 14th Singapore surrendered unconditionally to Japan. On the 16th over 40,000 Indian officers and soldiers were to be handed over by the British to the Japanese as prisoners of war. Among those gathered were all the officers who were to later organize and lead the I.N.A. There were Mohan Singh, Bhonsle, Kiani, Sehgal, Chatterjee, Shah Nawaz, Dhillon and N.S. Gill. These people were handed over as mere goods as nobody's babies, and the British were to pay for this on the battlefield of Imphal. Now all these people became anti-British. So N.S. Gill had a talk with Captain Mohan Singh and the Japanese representative. In March a Conference was held at Tokyo. Representatives came from Malaya, Thailand and China. Together with Mr Rash Bihari Bose and Mr. Anand Mohan Sahay, they met Japanese Government including premier Tojo. Here a decision was taken to organize an I.N.A and an Indian Independence League throughout East Asia. A very impressive and large conference

was then held at Bangkok in July. Two hundred civilian representatives from all countries in East Asia and over fifty officers attended. Mr. Rash Bihari Bose became the President of a Council of Action, whose members were Mohan Singh, Menon, Raghvan and Gilani. Thereafter the I.N.A. was organized and from the 1st September it came physically into being.<sup>1</sup>

Captain Mohan Singh was confirmed G.O.C. of the I.N.A. Within two months a force of 40,000 was made ready. By the end of November an advance party had reached Rangoon. Forward posts were formed near the Indian frontier in Akyab and Imphal areas. But soon differences cropped up between the I.N.A. forces and the Japanese Government. The reason being that Japanese appeared to be unprepared for an immediate push into India. The difference widened and Colonel N.S. Gill was arrested by the Japanese Government on 8th December, 1942 at 4 p.m. So the Council of Action resigned. The Japanese Government then arrested General Mohan Singh on the 22nd December and the first I.N.A. stood dissolved.

But even after this dissolution, Mr. Rash Bihari Bose and the Japanese wanted that the I.N.A. should continue as before. Colonel R.M. Kasliwal thought over this problem of revival. It was felt that there was a great necessity of a leader who could tackle the Japanese in the diplomatic field on the one hand and who could at the same time give a sound lead to this movement on the other and thus help restore confidence among the Indians, both in civil and in the military, which was at that time badly shaken.

It was felt that there was no one in East Asia at that time who could achieve that, and there was only one person who could steer the I.N.A. Ship successfully at that stage and that was Subhas Chandra Bose, who was then residing in Germany. A brief introduction of Subhas Chandra Bose would not be out of place here.

The British Government arrested Subhas Bose on 2 July, 1940 under section 129 of the Defence of India Rules. He was released on 5th December 1940 on medical reasons. After his release Bose remained in his own house in Elgin Road,

Calcutta, which was under strict surveillance by the police. He was last seen there on 16 January 1941 but ten days later it was reported that he was not to be found in the house.

Bose left his house on 17 January 1941 at about 1.25 a.m. and proceeded by car to Gomoh. Later on he went by railway train to Peshawar, and then passing through Jamrud and by passing the Landikotal Fort reached Garhi. He crossed the Indian border on foot, and motored down to Kabul. On March 18, 1941, Subhas Bose left Kabul. He was accompanied by two Germans and one Italian. In the passport given by the Italians his name was put down as Mozatia. One of the Germans who accompanied Bose was R. Weller, a very clever man. Dr. Weller escorted him to Berlin. From Kabul they drove to the Russian frontier. On March 20. Subhas Bose left by train for Moscow from the Russian border. He reached Moscow on March 27, stayed there for a night and on the 28th March flew from Moscow to Berlin.

Now all leaders of the defunct I.N.A. asked the Japanese Government to request the German Government to send Bose to East Asia. The leaders also made quite clear to the Japanese authority that unless they would give them satisfactory assurances about bringing Subhas from Germany, they would not reform another I.N.A. Having got proper assurances they started reorganising the second I.N.A., and it was finally raised in the month of February 1943 with Major General J.K. Bhonsle as Director, Military Bureau and Major-General M Z Kiani as Army Commander.

Subhas Bose sent a Radio message from Germany to the members of the Bangkok Conference accepting their invitation to join them. He reached Penang (Sumatra) by a submarine and from there he flew to Tokyo in June 1943. From there he came to Singapore.

Subhas Bose arrived in the Civil airport in Singapore on the morning of 2nd July. A couple of days later a representative gathering of Indians from all over East Asia was held in Cathay Buildings and amongst tremendous enthusiasm Netaji took over charge of the Presidentship of Indian Independence League in East Asia from Mr. Rash Bihari Bose. Netaji told them that

the first pre-requisite for the attainment of freedom was that they should consider themselves freemen and women and not think in terms of a subject people. He also hinted at the possibility of establishing a provisional Government of Free India at an early date. On the 8th of July he inspected the I.N.A. and took the general salute. It was on this day that he addressed the I.N.A. as Azad Hind Fauz. It was this day he declared that our goal was Delhi and to hoist our tri-colour flag on the Red Fort of Delhi and gave us our slogan of "Chalo Delhi". Thus the arrival of Netaji in Singapore brought a new life to this movement.

The provisional Government of Azad Hind was established on October 21, 1943 and its first act was to declare war on Britain and America. This Government was subsequently recognised by no less than nine countries, and diplomatic relations were opened up with some of them and even envoys were exchanged with a few.

Gradually the I.N.A. went into action and on the 4th of February, 1944 troops entered the Arakan sector. In the fighting of the Imphal sector troops played a very prominent part. The troops chased the British forces deep into the Manipur sector. Some of I.N.A. troops reached Kohima and occupied that town.

Some even reached Dimapore. The fortress of Imphal was surrounded and all communications and approaches to this town were cut except the air route. After some time the Japanese withdrew their air support. They diverted it to their homeland. The troops fought on half rations. Even half rations stopped after some time. Then came rains and then their ammunitions were exhausted. So troops retreated. The Imphal campaign ended in a tragic failure.

Netaji then made a whirlwind tour of Malaya and appealed for more men, more money and more material. The expansion programme of the Army was in full swing and No. 2 and No. 3 Divisions of the Azad Hind Fauz which had already been raised were being given intensive training. Netaji visited Singapore in January, 1945. In Burma, however, things were

shaping differently. The Japanese were pushed back in the Arakan sector and Akyub had fallen. On May 3, Rangoon fell and most of I.N.A. troops under the Command of Major-General Loganadhan were captured by the British. Netaji alone with Rani Jhansi regiment left Rangoon. About the middle of June 1945 Netaji arrived in Singapore.

Netaji at that time had been keeping an indifferent health. The war situation had gradually deteriorated. American planes were hammering the Japanese mainland and had a complete mastery of the air and sea in the Pacific. Still the I.N.A. were ready to fight but then came the atom bomb which upset all calculations and the entry of Russia in the war against Japan precipitated Japanese downfall. Japan surrendered on August 15, 1945.

On the morning of the 16th of August, Netaji left Singapore in a plane along with Colonel Habibur Rahman. Netaji is supposed to have died on August 18th, 1945, when the plane carrying him back from Singapore is said to have caught fire on the Taipeh air field.

With his death<sup>2</sup> the I.N.A. collapsed. On the 5th of September 1945, the British came to Singapore and I.N.A. people were taken prisoners.

### I.N.A. Trial

At the conclusion of the war, over 20,000 of its members had been rounded up and repatriated to India. The Army authorities had evidence that certain officers among them had been guilty, not only of waging war against the King, but of 'Gross brutality in the methods employed to induce their fellow prisoners to join them'. It was proposed that they should be put on public trial in Delhi and an ordinance was promulgated setting up a Military Tribunal for the purpose. The trial was intensified by the inter-communal character of the first and most important trial. Major-General Shah Nawaz, a Muslim, Colonel Dhillon, a Sikh and Major Sahgal, a Hindu,<sup>3</sup> were put on trial together for waging war. The Congress took up the case of the accused and set up a panel of defence under Bhul

Bhai Desai, which included Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Nehru. All were convicted, but under pressure from Nehru, Gandhi and others the sentences were suspended.

The holding of the I.N.A. trials in Delhi was indeed a blunder. The army authorities showed characteristic disregard of the political tension prevailing in the country at the time. If the purpose was to demonstrate the British Government's determination that no disloyalty in the Armed forces would be tolerated, that purpose was certainly not accomplished.<sup>4</sup>

### Notes

1. Sharma, Shri Ram, Netaji, p. 193.
2. The Government of India had constituted the 'Netaji Inquiry Commission' presided over by Mr G.D. Khosla, former Chief Justice of the Punjab High Court, to inquire into alleged death of Netaji as the result of plane crash on August 18, 1945 at Taipeh.
3. Brecher, Michael, Nehru, p 307
4. Menon, V.P , Transfer of Power, p. 223.

## TWO

### **1946 : YEAR OF DECISION LORD PETHICK LAWRENCE—"1946 WILL BE A CRUCIAL YEAR IN INDIA'S HISTORY"**

1946 was to be a year of fateful events. During the period immediately following the war it became overwhelmingly evident that the power of the British Empire was rapidly waning. In India, as in other areas of South and South-East Asia, it was equally clear that the desire for independence had been growing at such an accelerated rate that freedom from foreign rule would have to be granted without further delay; that the principles enunciated in the Atlantic Charter must be as fully applicable to the awakening East as to the West.

With regard to India, in particular, Britain was finding it difficult to maintain her dominant position, if for no other reason than a financial one.

Pandit Nehru issued a statement in February 1<sup>st</sup>, 1946 in this way; 'Of course I expect a peaceful and friendly settlement with Britain. If such a settlement is reached, India's relations with Great Britain will naturally be closer, as there are so many

ties already developed between our two peoples, some good, many bad....From no point of view can India fit into (a current) Dominion status pattern.<sup>1</sup>

### Mounting Tensions

During the winter months of 1945-46, tensions in India had been steadily increasing. By 1946 there was a mounting wave of student demonstrations, strikes and violence.

Early in 1946, the Royal Air Force (R.A.F.) mutinied in Calcutta, as well as elsewhere in India and the Middle East. Such disruptive actions "were followed by hunger strikes in the R.I.A.F. (Royal Indian Air Force) and minor cases of indiscipline in the R.I.N. (Royal Indian Navy)." On February, 18, 1946 an explosive incident occurred that was to have far-reaching consequences: a naval mutiny in Bombay. During the ensuing, five days, both the leading base of the R.I.N. and Bombay itself "presented the appearance of a minor battlefield, though there was little bloodshed."

There were strong political overtones to the mutiny. Congress and Muslim League flags were flown from the 'captured' ships and shore establishment. A very ugly situation developed. Admiral Godfrey, flag officer-commanding, Royal Indian Navy, made a broadcast to the ratings calling upon them to surrender. It was due largely to the efforts of Vallabhbhai Patel that, on 23rd February, the ratings surrendered.

The Army and the Air Force were altogether unaffected. There was trouble in several places, though not of a serious character.

Genuine grievances were at the root of the mutinies, along with the restlessness common to all servicemen at the end of the war. However, there can be little doubt that the loss of 'face' by the Government of India as a result of the I.N.A. affair contributed to the belief in the armed forces generally that mutiny was not a serious offence. The political significance of the events were immense, but it seems more than a mere coincidence that the announcement about the British Cabinet

Mission was made on 19 February 1946, one day after the outbreak of the mutiny.

And General Tuker noted that 'as late as June 1946 the ripples of the R.I.N. mutinies were still disturbing the surface of India.'<sup>2</sup>

#### Announcement of Cabinet Mission, February 19

On the 19th February 1946 it was announced in both Houses of British Parliament that 'in view of the Paramount importance not only to India and to the British Commonwealth but to the peace of the World of a successful outcome of the discussions with the leaders of Indian opinion,' the Government had decided to send out to India a special Mission of Cabinet Ministers to seek in association with the Viceroy an agreement with these leaders on principles and procedure relating to the Constitutional issue. The members of the Mission were to be Lord Pethick Lawrence, the Secretary of State for India, Sir Stafford Cripps, the President of the Board of Trade, and Mr. A.V. Alexander, the first Lord of the Admiralty.<sup>3</sup>

Further statements by the British threw additional light upon the nature of the Mission's task which "was essentially to help the Viceroy give effect to the programme outlined in his statement of September 19th (1945), that is to say, the bringing into being of, first, a Constitution-Making body, and secondly, an interim Executive Council supported by the main Indian Parties. There was no intention that the Mission should take part in framing a Constitution for India: that was the responsibility of Indians themselves. Nor would they like Sir Stafford Cripps in 1942, take with them definite proposals on which to base their negotiations.

Pandit Nehru stated that Congress would enter into talks with members of the British Cabinet Mission, in the hope and belief that a satisfactory solution of the Indian problem would be evolved.

The initial announcement about the Cabinet Mission was obscure on the approach to a settlement. Mr. Clement Attlee, the British Prime Minister filled in the gaps in a statement

before the House of Commons on March 15, 1946. On the core issue of independence the British Prime Minister declared : 'India herself must choose what will be her future Constitution I hope that the Indian people may elect to remain within the British Commonwealth....But if she does so elect, it must be by her own free will....If, on the other hand, she elects for independence, in our view she has a right to do so'. As for the Muslim League's goal of Pakistan, he said 'we are very mindful of the rights of minorities and minorities should be able to live free from fear. On the other hand, we cannot allow minority to place a veto on the advance of the majority '<sup>4</sup> The Congress was jubilant and the League dismayed.

The Mission of Cabinet Minister arrived in New Delhi on 24 March, 1946. On March 25, Lord Pethick Lawrence stated : 'While the Congress are representatives of large numbers (than the Muslim League) it would not be right to regard the....League as merely a minority political party, they are in fact majority representatives of the Great Muslim Community.' Sir Stafford Cripps stated at a later press conference : "As in everything else, the importance of minorities, their position and their influence may well have changed in the last five or six years, and that may change the application of any statement....made in the past. We really want to start...on a fresh basis. If we go back to interpret everything that has been said from Queen Victoria down today I think we will get into an awful muddle. The best way of approach is : we want to give independence to India as quickly and smoothly as we can."<sup>5</sup>

The Cabinet Mission's talks with Congress and Muslim League representatives continued throughout the spring of 1946. On the 17th April, the Cabinet Mission adjourned for a short recess and left for Kashmir on a seven days' holiday to review the results of the interviews and informal talks with the leaders. They returned to Delhi on the 24th April and on the 27th April Lord Pethick-Lawrence, in a letter addressed to the Presidents of the Congress and the Muslim League suggested that they should make "one further attempt to obtain agreement between the Muslim League and the Congress."<sup>6</sup>

The fundamental principles of the scheme were deceptively simple. There was to be a Union Government dealing with. . Foreign Affairs, Defence and Communications... (and) two groups of Provinces, the one of the predominantly Hindu provinces and the other of the predominantly Muslim provinces dealing with all other subjects which the Provinces in the respective groups desire to be dealt with in common. The provincial Governments will deal with all other subjects and will have all the residuary sovereign rights. It is contemplated that the Indian (Princely) States will take their appropriate place in this structure on terms to be negotiated with them.<sup>6</sup> Both Congress and Muslim League agreed to confer on "fundamental principles" with British Ministers at Simla, concerning acceptable methods of terminating British rule in India

The Congress was opposed to the formation of groups on communal lines with a separate legislature and executive machinery for each group. It objected, too, to compulsion in the early stages for a province to join a particular group. "In any event" wrote the Congress President in reply to Lord Pethick Lawrence's letter, "It would be wholly wrong to compel a province to function against its own wish." You have referred to certain "fundamental principles", the Congress President went on to say, "but there is no mention of the basic issue before us, that is, Indian independence and the consequent withdrawal of the British Army from India. It is only on this basis that we can discuss the future of India or any interim arrangement. While we are ready to carry on negotiations with any party as to the future of India, we must state our conviction that reality will be absent from any negotiations whilst an outside ruling power still exists in India."<sup>7</sup> Pandit Nehru had also issued a statement on March 21, 1946 which embodied the spirit, which was found in Maulana Azad's statement. Pandit Nehru's statement ran thus : "The fundamental factor for success in the coming (Cabinet Mission) negotiations....is a clear recognition of Indian independence, after which as between equals, with certain common interests, the representatives of India and Britain can proceed to negotiate terms".

On April 27th, a letter from Lord Pethick Lawrence told the Presidents of the two parties—Congress and the Muslim League—that the Cabinet Mission had decided to make one further attempt “to obtain agreement between them.” It would be useless, however, to ask them to meet unless there could be placed before them a basis of negotiation which might lead to agreement.<sup>8</sup> The Congress President there upon accepted the invitation to attend the Conference. The Muslim League agreed to participate in the Conference without “commitment or prejudice” to its position as set forth in its Lahore resolution of 1940, on Pakistan, and confirmed at the Muslim League Legislature’s Convention on the 9th April, 1946.

### Notes

1. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru II, pp 198-99.
2. Brecher, Michael, Nehru, p. 309
3. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru II, p 205
4. Quoted in Brecher's Nehru, p. 309.
5. Pyarelal, Mahatma, I, p. 202.
6. Quoted in Brecher's Nehru, pp 303-310.
7. Quoted in V.P. Menon's, Transfer of Power, p. 203.
8. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru, II, p. 225.

## THREE

### SIMLA CONFERENCE PROPOSALS

The Simla Conference of 1946 opened on May 5th. Not since the first Simla Conference nearly a year before had Congress and League leaders met round the same table. The Conference was opened with a short address by Lord Pethick Lawrence, followed by preliminary statements by the parties. The Congress had been represented by Pandit Nehru, Maulana A.K. Azad, Sardar Patel and Abdul Gaffar Khan and the League by M.A. Jinnah, Liaquat Ali, Nistar and Mohammed Ismail. Gandhi attended at the Mission's request. The Mission set both parties a document containing suggested points for agreement, which elaborated the idea already put forward that there should be a constitutional structure in three tiers, consisting of a Union, Groups and Provinces.

"The Union would consist of a Government and a Legislature, each containing an equal number of representatives of the Hindu majority and Muslim majority provinces, together with representatives of the states. It would deal not only with

Foreign Affairs, Defence and Communications but also with fundamental rights, and would have the power to obtain the finance required for all these subjects. All the remaining powers would vest in the provinces but an intermediate tier might be formed by provinces joining themselves into Groups, which might set up their own Executives and legislatures. It would be for the groups to decide which of the Provincial subjects they would take in common. The Union and Group Constitutions would provide that any province might by a majority vote of its legislative Assembly call for a reconsideration of the terms of the Constitution at the end of ten years. The document also made suggestions for the composition and procedure of the Constituent Assembly.

"The essence of the compromise was the option to form Groups. The mission hoped to be able to persuade the league that if the Muslim majority provinces were able to group themselves into organisations which would regulate in common such matters as religion, culture, education, trade and industry, they need have no fear of the extinction of their own way of life under the pressure of the Hindu majority; so that they would be willing to co-operate in an All-India Union with minimum powers, in which they would have equal representation with the Hindu-majority Provinces. The scheme was in fact designed to give them the advantage of Pakistan without the disadvantages inherent in the division of India. Equally the Mission hoped that Congress would recognize that the formation of groups and a weak union were lesser evils than the 'vivisection' of the country."<sup>1</sup>

After the Simla Conference had met from May 5 to 12 the Cabinet Mission suggested further points for possible agreement; that "as a concession to the Congress view point the original list of the union subjects, viz. Foreign Affairs, Defence and Communications could be enlarged by the addition of 'Fundamental Rights and...that the Union Government should have the necessary powers to obtain for itself the finances it required for those subjects. To make the Union acceptable to the League it was suggested that the Constituent Assembly should divide up into three sections, one representing the

Hindu-Majority provinces, the second representing the Muslim-Majority provinces and the third representing the states. The first two sections would then meet separately and decide provincial Constitutions for their groups and if they wished, group Constitutions.

To counter-balance the Congress objection to the compulsory grouping of Provinces in (a) section, the Cabinet Mission proposed that a Province should have the freedom to opt out of the original group and go to another group or remain out of any group by a majority of the votes of its representatives, if the provincial or group Constitution was not acceptable to it. The three sections would then meet to frame the Union Constitution. "Under the Union Constitution, there would thus be three sub-federations: One of the Muslim-majority provinces, another of the Hindu majority provinces and the third of the states. The Muslim-majority provinces would have a parity of representation in the Union legislature as well as in the Union Government with the Hindu majority provinces irrespective of whether the provinces in question formed themselves into groups or not. Further, to compensate the League for the possible loss through opting out of the N.W F.P. (North-West Frontier Province) from the Muslim majority group and for the exclusion of Assam from the same which the League demanded for the Muslim majority group, it was proposed that there should be the additional safeguard that no measure affecting a communal issue in the Union Constitution would be passed unless the majority of both the major communities voted in its favour."

The Congress was prepared to accept the formation of groups provided it was entirely optional. It however, held that this would be for the representatives of the provinces to decide after the Constituent Assembly had framed the Constitution for the All-India Federal Union. The Muslim League, on the other hand, demanded that there should be a separate Constitution-Making body for the six "Muslim Provinces", namely, the Punjab, the N.W.F.P., Baluchistan, Sindh, Bengal and Assam (although Assam was a Hindu majority province) from the very beginning.

After the Constitution of the Pakistan Federal Government and the Provinces were framed the Constitution-Making bodies of the two Groups - (the) Pakistan group and the Hindustan group—sitting together would deal with the three subjects, namely, Foreign Affairs, Defence and Communications necessary for defence.

"There were other points of differences. The Congress wanted the Union Government to have the power to raise the finances required for the discharge of its functions by taxation. The Muslim League insisted that the Federal Union should in no event have the power to raise revenues in its own right but only by contribution. The league further wished that no decision--legislative, executive or administrative--should be taken by the Union in regard to any matter of a controversial nature except by a majority of three fourths."<sup>2</sup>

The Congress agreed to optional grouping of Provinces and a Muslim veto on communal issues in order to allay the anxiety of the Muslims, so that Hindus and Muslims might be able to live together as one nation in their common motherland. The Muslim League regarded the proposals that had been made "as a strategic gain in its battle for Pakistan."

Congress, on the other hand, was of the opinion that it was not up to the Simla Conference to arrange for the division of India.

As had been feared from the very beginning, the difficulty about parity in regard to the executive or the legislature as between seven Hindu-majority Provinces, and the five Muslim-majority Provinces, proved insurmountable. This is worse than Pakistan, wrote Gandhi to Sir Stafford Cripps on the 8th May. As a way out he suggested that an 'impartial non-British tribunal' should make an award on this issue as on any other matters of difference otherwise incapable of adjustment 'between the League and the Congress.'

The Congress was prepared to do anything within the bounds of reason to remove fear and suspicion from the mind of any Province or community but it felt itself unable to endorse any

suggestions that "went against the basic method of democracy on which it hoped to build up a Constitution.

Thus on fundamental issues the deadlock was complete. The Congress insisted that the Union Constitution be framed first, the League, after the group Constitutions were drafted. The Congress insisted on the optional character of the groups, the League demanded that they should be compulsory. The Congress insisted on the right of the Union to raise revenue by taxation, the League refused.

Failure of the Conference seemed inevitable. The Congress, there upon suggested that an umpire should be appointed by the Congress and the Muslim League to settle matters of difference between them. The suggestion was turned down by the League.

On the 12th May, it was announced that the Conference had failed to bring the Congress and the League to an agreement. The members of the Cabinet Mission thereupon returned to Delhi.

#### **Cabinet Mission's Own Plan, May 16**

After the failure of the Simla Conference, the Cabinet Mission with the "full approval of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom" published their own recommendations to "ensure a speedy setting up of a new Constitution." Their plan consisted of two parts. The long term plan for the setting up a Constitution-Making body and the short term proposal for the formation of an "Interim Government having the support of the major political parties" who might be willing to accept the statement of the 16th May.

The issue was whether India was to be partitioned or whether it was to remain undivided. Attlee announced the Mission's opposition to Jinnah's claims regarding partition. The Viceroy also favoured a united India. Thus there was no official British approval whatever at the time of the League's demand "that the Moslem-majority provinces should have full autonomy." There was in fact, British resistance to what Maulana Azad termed Muslim League leader's loose talk "of

the partition of India and the establishment of an independent state for the Moslem-majority areas."

The British Cabinet Mission plan of May 16, 1946 clearly stated: "A separate sovereign state of Pakistan on the lines claimed by the Muslim League would not solve the communal minority problem...we are therefore unable to advise the British Government that the power which at present resides in British hands should be handed over to two entirely separate sovereign states."<sup>3</sup>

In place of the Muslim League's demand of Pakistan, the Cabinet Delegation recommended their "Three-tier Scheme" of 16th May—foreshadowed in their suggested points for agreement at the Simla Conference.

The May 16 Cabinet Mission plan further provided that only three subjects would belong compulsorily to the Central Government. These were: defence, foreign affairs and communications...It divided the country into three zones, A, B, and C.... The Members of the Mission felt that this would give a great sense of assurance to the minorities. Section B would include the Punjab, Sindh, the N. W. F. P. and British Baluchistan. This would constitute a Moslem majority area. In Section C, which included Bengal and Assam, the Moslems would have a small majority over the rest. The Cabinet Mission thought that this arrangement would give complete assurance to the Moslem minority, and satisfy all legitimate fears of the League (Section A would include all the predominantly Hindu territory between section B in western India and Section C in eastern India.)

According to Dorothy Muslims in the majority provinces would...exercise almost complete autonomy. Only certain agreed subjects would be dealt with at the section level. Here also the Muslims were assured of a majority in sections B and C and it was hoped that Muslims would be able to satisfy all their legitimate hopes. So far as the Centre was concerned, there were only three subjects (as above) which from the nature of the case could not be provincially administered.<sup>4</sup>

The long range plan followed the 'fundamental principles of Pethick Lawrence'. It had been mentioned that the sections would meet to form groups and to draft the provincial and group Constitutions.

Each province would have the right to opt out of a group by a simple majority of its legislature after the first elections under the new provincial Constitutions.

The May 16 Cabinet Mission plan was an "ambiguous" one. As Pyarelal has commented: "Their 16th May plan was fashioned somewhat after the heroine in one of Goethe's classics in whose tineaments everybody saw the image of his own beloved. There was in it something for everybody. To the Congress it offered a common Centre, though in an attenuated form, and 'Freedom' of choice to provinces to form groups or not. To the Muslim League it held out the prospect of Muslim Zones to be formed in the north-west and north-east of India by making it obligatory on the representatives of the Provinces to sit in sections to settle the provincial Constitutions. To the Princes it offered release from Paramountcy which was not to be transferred to the successor Government. To the Sikhs it held out the prospect of preserving intact the integrity of their home land."<sup>6</sup>

The Mission tried to find an acceptable compromise on many controversial issues by drawing an imaginary line half way between the demands of the Congress and the League. There were two clauses which appeared contradicting each other directly. In paragraph 15, Clause 5, it was stated that 'provinces should be free to form groups, with executives, and legislatures, and each group could determine the provincial subjects to be taken in common'. In laying down the procedure, however paragraph 19, sub-clauses (iv) and (v) stipulated that the provincial representatives will divide up into three sections. These sections shall proceed to settle provincial Constitutions and shall also decide whether any group Constitution shall be set up for those Provinces. The first provision made grouping voluntary, the second compulsory. The battle of interpretation was concentrated on this point.<sup>6</sup>

The Muslim League was serious to take advantage of the language of para 19. Jinnah declared that he found in the Cabinet Delegation's plan the 'basis of Pakistan' and accordingly, the Muslim League Council, on the 6th June, resolved that "inasmuch as the bases and the foundation of Pakistan are inherent in the Mission's plan by virtue of compulsory grouping of the six Muslim provinces", in Section B and C, they were "willing to co-operate with the Constitution-Making machinery proposed by the Mission." No secret was made of the hope that "It would ultimately result in the establishment of complete sovereign Pakistan" which had been ruled out by the Cabinet Delegation in their statement. Thus the All-India Muslim League Council accepted the Cabinet Mission's proposals by an overwhelming majority.<sup>7</sup>

In the course of their meeting, after the announcement of the Cabinet Mission's 16th May plan, Lord Pethick Lawrence had assured Gandhi in reply to a question by him that the whole basis of their plan was voluntary. Later, Lord Wavell in one of his letters to the Congress President maintained that the 16th May Statement did not make grouping compulsory. The only provision that was made that the representatives of certain provinces should meet in sections so that they could decide whether or not they wished to form groups. Wrote Maulana Azad in his letter of 20th May, to Lord Pethick Lawrence : "The basic provision gives full autonomy to a Province to do what it likes and subsequently there appears to be a certain compulsion in the matter which clearly infringes that autonomy...it is not clear how a province or its representatives can be compelled to do something which they do not want to do."<sup>8</sup>

In the face of deadlock the Cabinet Mission put forward its own recommendation On 16 June 1946 it proposed the formation of an Interim Government consisting of six Hindu members of the Congress, one being an untouchable, five Muslims of the League and three representatives of the minorities, one Sikh, one Christian, and one Parsi. Jinnah had scored another victory, because all Muslim seats were now to be

filled up by Jinnah's nominees including the seat of a nationalist Muslim. Furthermore, all five League nominees were approved, but three Congress nominees were replaced without consulting the party. This hope had been expressed by the Cabinet Mission and the Viceroy that all parties especially the two major parties would accept this proposal so as to overcome the present obstacles, and would co-operate for the successful carrying on of the Interim Government. Should this proposal be accepted, the Viceroy would aim at inaugurating the new Government about the 26th June.<sup>9</sup>

The Congress Working Committee subsequently considered the Cabinet Mission's statements of May 16 and June 16 in its session from 20 to 25 June. After reviewing both sets of proposals, the Committee rejected the Mission's plan for an Interim Government at the Centre, while agreeing to the long term plan, but with its own interpretation of disputed clauses. Essentially, Congress continued to desire creation of a free, united, democratic Indian Federation, with a Central authority. Such a Federation would lead "to the rapid advance of the masses, economically and socially, so that their material standards (Might) be raised and poverty, malnutrition, famine and the lack of the necessities of life (might) be ended." The Congress Working Committee hoped that "all the people of the country (might) have the freedom and opportunity to grow and develop according to their genius."<sup>10</sup>

The Working Committee recommended that a meeting of the A.I.C.C. be held on July 6 and 7, in order to consider and ratify its June decisions.

Meanwhile, the Cabinet Mission, "instead of recognizing the harsh reality of continued deadlock" interpreted the Congress Resolution as "acceptance" of its Constitutional proposals, thereupon shelving its recommendation for an Interim Government. It consequently left for England at the end of June.

The next stage in the complicated story of the Cabinet Mission began early in July (July 4 and 7, 1946), when the A.I.C.C. met in Bombay to consider and ratify its June decisions.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru presided over it as President for the fourth time. The debate was spirited, but the outcome was never in doubt. The policy enunciated by the Working Committee was approved by 204 to 51. Yet the Congress was unhappy about the plans, as evident in Nehru's speech on 7 July 1946. The speech ran as follows : "The Congress idea of independence is certainly different from what the Muslim League or the Viceroy thinks.

"Our idea of independence is that there must be absolutely no foreign domination in India and that India may even break her connections with the British.

"...There is a good deal of talk of the Cabinet Mission's long term plan and short-term plan. So far as I can see, it is not a question of our accepting any plan long or short. It is only a question of agreeing to go into the Constituent Assembly ...We will remain in that Assembly so long as we think it is good (for) India and we will come out when we think it is injuring our cause and then offer battle."<sup>11</sup>

The Council of the All India Muslim League passed a resolution on June 6 accepting the Cabinet Mission's proposals, subject however to a host of reservations. The Council protested against the references made and the conclusions recorded in the statement with regard to the Muslim demand for the establishment of a full sovereign state of Pakistan, and declared that a separate sovereign Pakistan was still the unalterable objective of the Muslims in India.

#### Notes

1. Quoted in Norman Dorothy's book, Nehru, II, pp 225-226.
2. Pyarelal, Mahatma Gandhi, I, p 206.
3. Quoted in Norman Dorothy's book, Nehru II, p 230.
4. Ibid.

5. Pyarelal, Mahatma Gandhi, p 212.
- 6 Brecher, Michael, Nehru, p. 311.
7. The Annual Indian Register, 1946, Vol. I, p. 60
- 8 Quoted in Pyarelal's, Mahatma Gandhi, I, p 216.
- 9 Norman, Dorothy, Nehru, II, p 233.
10. Ibid., pp 233-234.
11. Ibid pp 234-235.

## **FOUR**

### **NEHRU'S-JULY 10 PRESS CONFERENCE IN BOMBAY**

The Congress had accepted the Cabinet Mission's statements of May 16 and June 16, with certain reservations. Pandit Nehru had already spoken his mind on July 7, 1946. This statement clearly indicated that Congress was not very happy with the Cabinet Mission's two statements. On 10 July, Pandit Nehru held a Press Conference in Bombay and made a statement, which set in train a most unfortunate series of consequences.

In reply to a request for amplification of the statement made in the All-India Congress Committee to the effect that Congress had made no commitment with regard to either the long or the short-term plan of the Cabinet mission except to enter the Constituent Assembly.

#### **Pandit Nehru**

If you read the correspondence that has passed between the Congress President and the Cabinet Mission and the Viceroy

you will see (under) what conditions and circumstances we agreed to go into (it) and we have agreed to nothing else. It is true that in going (into) the Constituent Assembly, inevitably, we have agreed to a certain process of going into it, that is, election of the candidates of the Constituent Assembly. What we do there, we are entirely and absolutely free to determine. We have committed ourselves (on) no single matter to anybody.

(With respect to the Congress statement that the Constituent Assembly was a sovereign bdy.) The Cabinet Mission's reply was more or less "yes", subject to two considerations (First), proper arrangement for minorities and (Second) a treaty between India and England. I wish the Cabinet Mission had stated that both these matters are not controversial.

In regard to....minorities, it is our problem and we shall, no doubt, succeed in solving it. We shall accept no outside interference....certainly not the British Government's interference.

How to make the job in the Constituent Assembly a success or not is the only binding factor. It does not make the slightest difference what the Cabinet Mission thinks or does in the matter.

### Of the Powers of the Proposed Union Centre

According to the Cabinet Mission's proposals there were three or four basic subjects in it, i.e. Defence, Foreign Affairs, Communications and the power to raise finances for these. Obviously, Defence and Communications have a large number of industries behind them. So these industries inevitably come under the Union Government and they are likely to grow. Defence is such a wide subject that it tends to expand its scope and activities more and more. All that comes under the Union Government.

Suppose there is trouble between the \*Provinces or States, or an economic breakdown due to famine conditions. The Centre comes in again, inevitably. However limited the Centre might be you can not help its having wide powers, because the

past few years have shown that if there were no Central authority ...conditions would have been far worse in India.... The scope of the Centre, even though limited, inevitably, grows, because it cannot exist otherwise.<sup>1</sup>

About the grouping scheme Nehru was clear. It would probably never come to fruition, he declared, because section A, the Hindu-majority provinces, would be opposed. the Frontier Province would oppose it in section B as would Assam in Section C, and provincial jealousies would thwart it.

This Press Conference of Pandit Nehru is considered to be much controversial. Various scholars have interpreted in various ways. Professor Michael Brecher, Nehru's first biographer has commented in this way : "There was much political insight in Nehru's speech. Few would deny that the Frontier and Assam, both Congress provinces at the time, would opt out of their groups if given an opportunity to do so in 1946. His reference to provincial jealousies found ample support in the post-partition history of West Pakistan and India. So too did his observations on a strong Centre : both India and Pakistan have had frequent recourse to emergency powers since Independence. Whether it was wise to utter such views in the political atmosphere of 1946 is another question. Nehru's remarks certainly cleared the air of confusion and hypocrisy. At the same time they destroyed the facade of agreement which the Cabinet Mission tried to maintain. In fact, his speech sparked the collapse of the Mission. There was nothing fundamentally new in his speech, but it was a serious tactical error."<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Leonard Mosley has commented in this way : "It was a moment in history when circumspection should have been the order of the day. There was much to be gained by silence. The fortunes of India were in the balance, and one false move could upset them....In the circumstances, Nehru's remarks were a direct act of sabotage."<sup>3</sup>

The press conference has also been called "explosive" and "historic changing". According to Maulana Azad, "the Press Conference was one of those unfortunate events which changed

the course of history.”<sup>4</sup> In his introduction to his book, Louis Fischer recounts that, after the above Conference question and answer period, he, himself, had addressed Nehru ; “You have changed the entire basis of the agreement with England.” To which, according to Fischer, Nehru smilingly replied : “I am fully aware of that.” Fischer refers to the fact that, in view of what had appeared to be an affirmative vote of the All-India Congress Committee with regard to the Mission plan, what Nehru said “Changed” everything. It should be noted, in this connection, that although Fischer, as well as Azad, were perturbed by Nehru’s remarks of July 10, Azad, himself, stated on the same date as also recorded in the Indian Annual Registers, “If unfortunately, any insuperable difficulties crop up in direct conflict with our fundamental principles, we shall not hesitate to kill the Constituent Assembly.”<sup>5</sup>

In reply to question by Dorothy Norman about Azad’s criticism of July 10, 1946 Press Conference, Nehru told : “I am sorry to confess that I have no very clear ideas of the day to day occurrences in those days; it was a great burden on all of us—a burden of decision, a burden of occurrences, events, happenings, all over, and the tremendous strain under which we were functioning in that Interim Government as it was called, inside the Government, I mean, apart from occurrences outside, because the Moslem League Party were out, as they openly said, to prevent us from functioning satisfactorily. ....So how can I judge how far I am responsible ? Mine was certainly part of the responsibility, and Maulana Sahib may be completely right in thinking that I acted wrongly. Only I would say this, that Maulana Sahib thinks too much in individual terms, sometimes, not in terms of historic forces at work. Individuals make a difference and have made a difference but sometimes individuals are only symbols of forces at work.”<sup>6</sup>

Though there has been too much comment of this Press Conference, but Pandit Nehru spoke nothing new here. He had already explained his reservations about the Cabinet Mission’s plans (see his July 7 speech above). The Muslim League itself had expressed reservations about the Mission’s

statement of June 16 concerning negotiations for an Interim Government. The League also raised objections, at the same time, both to the Mission's long-range plans, as well as to Congress reactions to the Mission's proposals. It is a different thing whether Nehru should have opened his mouth on this delicate question or not. But Jinnah made it a plea of refusal of the Mission's statement.

### **The Cabinet Mission's Plan and Statement : A Commentary**

It was a complicated plan. The three-tier scheme was impracticable. The three-tier scheme (Centre, Groups, and Provinces) would have brought endless friction between the Congress and the League. The administrative machinery would have broken down under this unworkable scheme. Cripps was an intellectual being and he wanted to solve the Indian problem intellectually. He wanted to satisfy both parties. Professor Michael Brecher comment runs thus : "He was riding two horses at the same time, trying to find a solution on paper which both parties would accept. His proposal, in effect, would have brought Pakistan in through the back door, by the group scheme, and would have maintained the facade of a united India. As long as the two Indian parties disagreed on fundamentals any plan was doomed."<sup>7</sup> The communal riots caused failure of the Cabinet Mission Plan.

### **Direct Action**

After July 10, Jinnah pressed more for Pakistan. Jinnah advanced this argument that Congress would not safeguard the Muslim interest on ground of its, 'Tyranny'. So the Council of the All-India Muslim League concluded its three-day session after passing two resolutions, one rejecting the British Cabinet Delegation's proposals and the other deciding to resort to direct action for the achievement of Pakistan.<sup>8</sup>

According to some historians, neither Congress nor the League had ever truly accepted the Cabinet Mission's long-range plan despite having at one time or another formally approved it—the British Labour Government and the Cabinet

Mission members whom it had sent to India, were in truth "Sincere in wanting to Transfer Power".

In its July 29 call for "Direct Action" to attain Pakistan, the League set up a Council of Action to remind Muslims that "it was in the month of Ramzan that the 'first open conflict between Islam and Heathenism' was fought and won by three hundred and thirteen Muslims in Arabia. A leaflet containing a special prayer for the crusade announced that ten crores of Indian Muslims who 'through bad luck had become slaves of Hindus and the British' would be starting 'a Jihad (Holy war) in this very month of Ramzan'. A leaflet bearing a picture of Jinnah with sword in hand stated : "We Muslims have had the Crown and have ruled. Be ready and take your swords.... O Kafer : Your doom is not far and the general massacre will come."<sup>9</sup> Jinnah further told : "What we have done today is the most historic act in our history. Never have we in the whole history of the League done anything except by Constitutional methods and by Constitutionalism. This day we bid good-bye to Constitutional methods....Today we have also forged a pistol and are in a position to use it."<sup>10</sup>

Just a week before July 29 Resolution calling for "Direct Action", the Viceroy resumed his efforts to convince both Nehru and Jinnah that a coalition Interim Government at the Centre should be formed, giving assurances that Britain would give the Interim Government the same consideration as a Dominion Government. On August, 6, 1946, the Viceroy, acting under Instruction from London, invited Nehru to submit proposals for formation of an Interim Government, because the Muslim League refused to come in. So at the request of the Viceroy, Pandit Nehru went to meet Jinnah at his house in Bombay on the morning of August 16, 1946 to plead with him to forget "Direct Action" and bring his League into the Government.

The meeting lasted for eighty minutes but Pandit Nehru failed in persuading Mr. Jinnah to change his mind. As Morley has said : "Pandit Nehru departed more convinced than ever that this man really stood in the way of India's freedom, more determined than ever to destroy him and the

myth of Pakistan which he had created; and yet still unaware of how strong Jinnah really was, how powerful was his hold on Muslim India." Mr. Morley's statement is prejudiced and far from truth. Pandit Nehru never made it a programme to destroy Jinnah. It is a fact that Pandit did not like the concept of Pakistan and he was opposed till its formation. To dislike the concept of Pakistan and to destroy Jinnah are both different things. Therefore Mr. Morley's statement is open to challenge.

August 16 had been proclaimed 'Direct Action Day'. There were three Muslim places in India, where the communal frenzy might flare up. Karachi and the Punjab were Muslim areas but no disturbances could take place there due to the efficient machinery. The Chief Secretary of the Sindh Government did not proclaim August 16 a public holiday at Karachi and Punjab had an efficient British Governor. Sir F van Jenkins, who did not allow the situation to deteriorate.

But the Bengal Government was under the control of the Muslim League and Mr. Saheed Suhrawardy was the Chief Minister of Bengal. The Muslims in Bengal outnumbered the Hindus and other people (33,000,000 Muslims against 27,315,000 others). The Chief Minister announced the 16th August as a general holiday in Calcutta. A mammoth League rally was held in Calcutta and violence started in Calcutta. Violence was the result of the Muslim League in general and the Bengal League Ministry in particular.

Mr. Saheed Suhrawardy managed the mobs from the slums. They had come with lathis, knives, bottles and automobile cranks. Violence began from early morning. The Chief Minister rather encouraged the Muslims to kill the Hindus. The Muslims dominated the scene till afternoon and by afternoon the Hindus and Sikhs came out on to the streets too, red hot for revenge and reprisal. At 2 p.m. on the afternoon of August 1946, Mr. Suhrawardy addressed a mass meeting in the Maidan, Calcutta's main square. The unruly mobs returning from the maidan began to interfere with those who did not join the hartal. Direct Action programme reached its

culmination in the Great Calcutta killing on 16th, 17th and 18th August.

It was estimated that more than five thousand persons were killed and more than fifteen thousand injured during the Great Calcutta Killing. Jinnah threw the entire responsibility of the communal frenzy, on the Cabinet Delegation, the Congress and on Gandhiji.<sup>11</sup>

The British owned 'Statesman' of Calcutta placed the blame on the League ; "The origin of the appalling carnage and loss in the capital of a great province we believe the worst communal riot in India's history was a political demonstration by the Muslim League" it wrote on 20th August when the killing had subsided. "The bloody shambles to which this country's largest city has been reduced is an abounding disgrace, which ..has inevitably tarnished seriously the All India reputation of the League itself." The 'Statesman' further wrote : "This is not a riot. It needs a word found in medieval history, 'a fury.' The senior British military officer commented : "February's killings had shocked us all but this was different. It was unbridled savagery with homicidal maniacs let loose to kill and to maim and burn. The underworld of Calcutta was taking charge of the city."<sup>12</sup>

The communal frenzy as comparable to the 'Great Calcutta Killing' had not occurred in the history of the British rule. But this was rather the beginning of communal madness that engulfed certain parts of the country. The Noakhali disturbances took place on the 10th October, 1946 and so the scene shifted to the Noakhali District of eastern Bengal. This was the work of Muslim gangs, who went on the rampage, killing, looting, converting Hindus by force, and destroying Hindu temples and property. In a report from a relief centre in Noakhali, in the first week of November, Miss Muriel Lester, the English pacifist and well-known social worker of Kingsley Hall fame wrote: "The worst of all was the plight of the women. Several of them had had to watch their husbands being murdered and then be forcibly married to some of those responsible for their death. These women had a dead look. It was not despair,

nothing so active as that. It was utter blankness... the eating of beef and declaration of allegiance to Islam has been forced upon many thousands as the price of their lives "<sup>13</sup> The official estimate was 300 killed and thousands made homeless. The Noakhali disturbances effected and the communal riot took place in the Chapra District of Bihar from 27th October to 28th October. As a result of the riot, nearly 115 persons were killed and 160 injured. It spread in Patna and Bhagalpur districts also on 31st October. Nearly 90 persons were killed and 160 injured.<sup>14</sup> The estimates varied again like the Noakhali disturbances. According to the first reports about five thousands were killed and so according to Prof. Michael Brecher not less than 7000 Muslims were in the Bihar communal riots. Pt. Nehru, Liaquat Ali Khan and Nishtar, all Members of the Interim Government came to Bihar on 3rd November. The presence of Pt. Nehru caused the situation to be improved. He gave a personal touch everywhere. He scolded the Hindus mercilessly for their brutal behaviour towards Muslims. He appealed for a return to sanity but also threatened harsh punishment unless the killing ceased. Nehru expressed deep sympathy for the victims of both communities. He was perturbed with the mass murder. "There appears to be a competition in murder and brutality" he said in the course of a moving report on the riots to the Central Assembly, New Delhi on November 14, 1946. The report went on : "unless we put a stop to this, the immediate future of our country is dark. That it can be put a stop to, I have little doubt. Not by a reliance on mere armed force, though that may be necessary occasionally, but by the efforts of all those who influence public opinion. can we put an end to this horror, which comes in the way of all political and social progress, and indeed which is already making life a burden for many of us."<sup>15</sup> On communal riots of Bihar Pt. Nehru said : "various incidents occurred in Bihar which added to the general excitement. Towards the end of October, there was trouble...(that) was soon suppressed. Then came...(what) was in essence a mass uprising, large numbers of peasants burning and killing mercilessly. This mass uprising lasted almost exactly one week. Just as it started suddenly, it ended equally suddenly. The Bihar situation was

brought completely under control after a week and is quiet now.”<sup>16</sup> About the origin of the communal riot, he told: “I found that during the Calcutta killing a large number of Biharis had lost their lives. Their relatives had returned to Bihar, together with many other refugees, and had spread out all over the rural areas carrying stories of what had happened in Calcutta. The people of Bihar were stirred profoundly. Then came news of Noakhali and East Bengal. These stories and more especially the accounts of abduction and rape of women and forcible conversion of large numbers of people, infuriated the populace. For some time they looked to the Central Government and hoped that this would give them relief and afford protection.”<sup>17</sup>

Mr. Arthur Henderson, Under-Secretary of State for India, said in the House of Commons on November 4, 1946 that the total number of persons killed and injured in communal riots between July and October 30, was estimated at 5,018 killed and 13,320 injured exclusive of casualties in the present disturbances in Eastern Bengal.<sup>18</sup> Lord Wavell had also taken an aerial tour over Bihar of riot affected areas on 4th November.

Dr. Sri Krishna Sinha Chief Minister of Bihar stated in a written reply during question hour in the Bihar Assembly that during the last communal riots in the province firing was resorted to on 38 times. He also disclosed that during the riot, 1,656 houses of Muslims and 692 houses of Hindus were looted and 6,845 persons were reported to have been arrested.<sup>19</sup>

### Notes

1. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru, II, pp. 238-239.
2. Michael, Brecher, Nehru, pp. 316-317. “
3. Mosley, Leonard, British Raj, pp. 27-28
4. Azad, M.A.K., India Wins Freedom, pp. 154-55.
5. The Indian Annual Register, 1946, II, p. 144.

6. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru, II, pp. 239-241.
7. Michael, Brecher, Nehru, p 318.
8. The Indian Annual Register, 1946, II (July 29), p. 9
9. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru, II, p. 243.
10. Quoted in Leonard Mosley's book The British Raj, p 29.
11. Pyarelal, Mahatma Gandhi, I, p. 236
12. Brecher, Michael, Nehru, p. 319
13. Pyarelal, Mahatma Gandhi, I, p 296
14. The Indian Annual Register, 1946, II, p 41.
15. Norman Dorothy, Nehru, II, p 271
16. Ibid p. 272.
17. Ibid , p. 271.
- 18 The Indian Annual Register, 1946, II, p. 42
19. The Hindu, May 22, 1947.

## FIVE

### THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT

The formation of the Interim Government proved a difficult task. On June 3, Lord Wavell, offered the League and Congress "equal representation" in the proposed interim Government, adding two other members, one representing the Sikhs and the other the untouchables. Although at first Jinnah agreed to this plan, a few days later the Viceroy decided to add Parsi and Anglo-Indian representatives. On June 16, after conferring with the Cabinet Mission, the Viceroy stated that he hoped "all parties, especially the two major" ones, would "Co-operate for the successful carrying on of an Interim Government." He proclaimed further that in the event of the two major parties—or either of them—proving unwilling to join, he would himself "proceed with the formation of an Interim Government" which would be "as representative as possible" of those who accepted the Cabinet Mission Plan.

The Muslim League interpreted the Viceroy's assurance in this way that if the members of Congress were "unwilling" to

co-operate, the Viceroy would still form his Government without them.

Now a statement on the formation of an Interim Government was made by Cabinet Delegation and the Viceroy on 16th June, 1946. It was stated that a representative Interim Government "should be set up to conduct the very heavy and important business to be carried through."

The third section of the statement listed those invited to serve as members of the Interim Government, including Nehru. The Interim Government was to consist of fourteen persons, six belonging to the Congress including a representative of the scheduled castes, five to the Muslim League, one Sikh, one Indian Christian and one Parsi. The Viceroy was to arrange the distribution of portfolios in consultation with the leaders of the two major parties. This hope had been expressed by the Viceroy and the Cabinet Mission that Indians of all communities would come to join the Interim Government. "Should this proposal be accepted, the Viceroy will aim at inaugurating the new Government about the 26th June."<sup>1</sup>

The paragraph 8 of the statement ran as follows : "In the event of the two major parties or either of them proving unwilling to join the setting up of a coalition Government on the above lines, it is the Intention of the Viceroy to proceed with the formation of an Interim Government which will be as representative as possible of those willing to accept the statement of May 16th."<sup>2</sup>

The Congress Working Committee subsequently considered the Cabinet Mission's statements of May 16 and June 16. After reviewing both sets of proposals, the Committee rejected the Mission's plan for an Interim Government at the Centre.

Jinnah made this statement on proposed Interim Government on June 28, 1946. The statement was as follows : "I would like to emphasize that if any attempt is made to whittle down in any way the assurances given to the Muslim League or to change or modify the basis of the statement of June 16 which has been accepted by the Muslim League, it will be regarded by Muslim India as going back on the part of the Cabinet

Delegation and Viceroy on their pledged word in writing and as a breach of faith.

"The British Government will in that case forfeit the confidence of Muslim India and those with whom they expect to work on their part according to their pledged word."<sup>3</sup>

The Cabinet Mission left consequently for England on 29 June 1946. There were moments during the summer of 1946 when it appeared that an interim Government might come into existence. Lord Wavell, Pandit Nehru and Jinnah had constant difficulties with one another. There existed distrust on all sides.

Congress attached great importance to what it termed "Independence in action" on the part of a Provincial Government. It was on the basis of such "independence" only, according to Nehru, that a satisfactory approach could be made. Since the nature of the status and power of a Provisional Interim Government, must in Nehru's view, be decided in clear language, he concluded that he was wholly unable to co-operate in the formation of a Government on the terms suggested by the Viceroy.<sup>1</sup>

In order to remove the deadlock, on August 6, 1946, the Viceroy, acting under instructions from London, invited Nehru to submit proposals for formation of an Interim Government. The Viceroy wrote a letter to Nehru in this way : "I have decided with the concurrence of His Majesty's Government to invite you as President of the Congress to submit to me proposals for the formation of an Interim Government....it will be for you to consider whether you should first discuss them with Mr. Jinnah; if you were able to reach an agreement with him, I should naturally be delighted."<sup>5</sup>

In view of the resolution of 'Direct Action Day' adopted by the Muslim League on July 29, Nehru wrote to the Viceroy on August 10, 1946 that it was not possible to expect that its leaders would agree to co-operate. 'Any premature attempt to induce them to do so" stated Nehru, "might produce a contrary result. Such an attempt will inevitably become public and result in communal controversy and further delay which you rightly deprecate."<sup>6</sup>

Pandit Nehru suggested that the best course would be for the Viceroy to make a public announcement to the effect that he had invited the President of the Congress to form the Provisional Government and that the latter had accepted his invitation : "It will then be possible for us to approach the Muslim League and invite its co-operation."

The Viceroy accepted Pandit Nehru's suggestion and on the 12th August, put out the necessary announcement. After the announcement, Pandit Nehru made another attempt to woo Jinnah, but he failed in his effort.

Hardly had the letter of invitation to Pandit Nehru left the Viceroy's table, the Viceroy was upset and he regretted his action. He even wanted to recall the letter of invitation but that was too late. Thereafter his own effort was to bring the League into the Interim Government at any cost. Even before "Pandit Nehru could submit his list of names for the Government, Lord Wavell wanted to send for Jinnah on his own to persuade him to come into the Government." Pandit Nehru was perplexed and he wrote a letter to Lord Wavell on August 19, 1946 : When you wrote to me that you had decided, with the concurrence of the British Government, to invite me, as President of the Congress, to make proposals for the formation of an Interim Government, we accepted this invitation on the understanding that the responsibility would be ours....I approached....Jinnah and sought the co-operation of the Muslim League. Mr. Jinnah was not willing to co-operate with us....we had then to proceed without him and the League.

"Your new proposal would change the whole approach to the problem and put an end to the responsibility which, at your suggestion, we had undertaken. We are now asked to revert to the previous stage which, we, had thought, had finally ended after months of fruitless effort."<sup>7</sup>

Now Jinnah made a statement on 18th August that especially upset Lord Wavell. He also lost patience and noted : "I have read the statement by Mr. Jinnah in to-day's paper and in the present circumstances I agree that there would be no use in my sending for him."

In submitting his proposals for the formation of the Interim Government, Pandit Nehru had pressed for the number of members in the new Cabinet to be raised to fifteen for efficient discharge of functions, as also to enable a representative of the Anglo-Indian community to be included. But the Viceroy, again, while he saw the "advantage of having an Anglo-Indian representative in the Executive Council," objected to it on the ground that it would make the League's joining the Government more difficult, and "the matter of paramount importance is (was) to leave no stone unturned to get the Muslim League to join the Executive Council." Pandit Nehru objected to the old designation "Executive Council" instead of "Interim Government". So Pandit Nehru wrote a letter to Lord Wavell on August 22, 1946 : "I do not know what your conception is of the proposed Provisional Government. It is going to be just another caretaker Government waiting and hoping for the Muslim League to walk in when it feels inclined to do so ? That would simply mean an ineffective, unstable Government....which exists more or less on sufferance. That might well lead to a worsening of the situation and possibly even to a repetition of the horrors of Calcutta. It is not for this that we would care to join the Provisional Government."<sup>8</sup>

After prolonged controversy, Congress decided to withdraw its final objections to entering an Interim Government. It thus became possible to form a new Government on September 2, 1946. So the personnel of the first All-Indian National Interim Government at the Centre was announced by the Viceroy on August 25, 1946. It consisted of 14 members, 12 of whom were named; the remaining two Muslims would be appointed later. The new Government would assume office on September 2. It was also announced that "His Majesty the King has accepted the resignation of the present members of the Governor-General's Executive Council"<sup>9</sup> and has appointed the following :

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru,  
 Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel,  
 Dr. Rajendra Prasad,  
 Mr. Asaf Ali,

Mr. C. Rajagopalachari,  
 Mr. Sarat Chandra Bose,  
 Dr. John Matthai,  
 Sardar Baldev Singh,  
 Sir Shaffaat Ahmad Khan,  
 Mr. Jagjivan Ram,  
 Syed Ali Zahur and Mr. Cooverji Hormusji Bhabha.

The Viceroy then made a broadcast on August 25, 1946. His Excellency made it clear that the offer made to the Muslim League was still open. The Viceroy said : "You will have heard the announcement of the names of the members of the new Interim Government, which will come into office very shortly. You will, I am sure, all realise that a very momentous step forward has been taken on India's road to freedom. Some of you who listen to me may feel, however, that the step should not have been taken in this way or at this time. It is to those that I want principally to address myself to night....

The Muslim League need have no fear of being outvoted on any essential issue. A coalition Government can only exist and function on the condition that both the main parties to it are satisfied. I will see that the most important portfolios are equitably shared. I sincerely trust that the league will reconsider their policy and decide to participate in the Government. I sincerely trust that the Muslim league will reconsider their decision not to take part in a plan which promises to give them so wide a field in which to protect the interests and to decide the future of the Muslims of India."<sup>10</sup>

Mr. M.A. Jinnah, President of the All-India Muslim League, then issued the following statement to the press on August 26, 1946. The statement ran in this way : "It is to be regretted that the Viceroy in his broadcast should have made such a misleading statement and contrary to facts that, though five seats out of 14 were offered to the Muslim League, though assurances were given that the scheme of Constitution-Making would be worked in accordance with the procedure laid down, and though the new Interim Government is to operate under the existing Constitution, it has not been possible to secure a

coalition. The truth is that the Viceroy wrote to me on July 22 making certain proposals which were virtually and substantially different from the Interim Government proposals embodied in the statement of June 16 and the assurances given to the Muslim League, enclosing a copy of a similar letter addressed by him to Pandit Nehru." In this way Jinnah turned down the Viceroy's offer.

Mr. Jinnah issued another statement on August 27, 1946 : "My reaction to the Viceroy's broadcast is that he has struck a severe blow to the Muslim League and Muslim India but I am sure that the Mussalmans of India will bear this up with fortitude and courage and learn lessons from our failure to secure our just and honourable position in the Interim Government and the Constituent Assembly.

"I once more repeat my question: why has the Viceroy gone back on what was announced in the statement of the Cabinet Delegation and the Viceroy on June 16 as final, and the assurances given to the Muslim League in his latter dated June 20 ? What had happened between June 16 and July 22 that he was pleased to change that formula vitally and substantially, and what has happened between July 22 and August 24 that he has gone ahead and jammed in a one-party Government ?

"If the Viceroy's appeal is really sincere, and if he is in earnest, he should translate it into concrete proposals and by his deeds and action."<sup>11</sup>

Meanwhile, His Majesty's Government was anxious that the Interim Government, the formation of which had already been publicly announced, should take office immediately. So the Interim Government was sworn in on September 2. On the eve of the Government assumption of office one of its Members, Sir Shaffat Ahmad Khan was the victim of a murderous assault.

Gandhiji was shocked and said : "We are not yet in the midst of civil war but we are nearing it."

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru made an inaugural broadcast as Prime Minister on September 7, 1946. In his initial broadcast

to the nation in his new role, he gave voice to his vision of the future, of his hopes and dreams—many of which were soon to be shattered by forces beyond his control. Yet the very uttering of his beliefs gave direction and a sense of purpose not only to India but other nations also aspiring toward freedom, nationhood and a peaceful world order. The statement followed the Congress election manifesto in its stress on relief and higher standard of living for the 'common and forgotten man in India' communal harmony, the struggle against untouchability, special aid for backward tribes etc. A striking feature was the clear indication of the essentials of his foreign policy : Non-alignment with power blocks; the emancipation of colonial and dependent peoples; the repudiation of racialism; co-operative relations with U.K. and the Commonwealth; friendship with the U.S and the U.S.S.R.; specially close ties with the countries of Asia, notably with south-east Asia and China, and the long-range good of a World Commonwealth. The concluding portion of his broadcast was very significant and it ran in this way : "India is on the move and the old order passes. Too long have we been passive spectators of events, the plaything of others. The initiative comes to our people now and we shall make the history of our choice. Let us all join in this mighty task and make India, the pride of our heart, great among nations, foremost in the arts of peace and progress. The door is open and destiny beckons to all. We go forward to success, to independence and to the freedom and well-being of the four hundred millions of India."<sup>12</sup>

The newly formed Interim Government had begun functioning. Lord Wavell liked to bring the League into the Government at any cost. So at the beginning of October the Viceroy entered into separate negotiations with Jinnah. On October 4, 1946, a list of demands was made by him "as the basis of the League's joining the Interim Government." These were brought to the notice of Pandit Nehru. There was nothing essentially new in his demands : that the Viceroy's Executive Council be strictly limited to fourteen members—Six Hindu Congressmen, including one untouchable, five League Muslims and three representatives of the minorities. The League

denied the Congress right to appoint a nationalist Muslim that vacancies be filled by the Viceroy in consultation with both parties; that the League be given a veto over all Council decisions on communal question, that the Vice-presidency of the Council rotate between Congress and League members; that the major portfolio be distributed equally; and that no changes be made in their allocation without the agreement of both parties.<sup>13</sup>

Pandit Nehru made only minor concessions. He offered the League the Vice-Chairmanship of the Co-ordinating Committee of the Executive Council instead of a rotating Vice-presidency. Vacancies, he suggested, should be decided by the Council, not by the Viceroy and disagreements on communal issues could be submitted to the Federal Court. He also offered the leadership of the Central Assembly to a League Minister. Jinnah yielded on most points.

On being informed by the Viceroy of the Muslim League's decision to come into the Interim Government, Pt. Nehru wrote to Lord Wavell on the 14th October ; "It is important for us to understand exactly how he proposes to join...The offer you made...was that five places...could be taken by the Muslim league and...you made it clear that a coalition Government must necessarily work as a team and not as a joining together of rival groups which did not co-operate for a common purpose (and)...the basis for participation in the Cabinet must ...be presumed to be the acceptance of the Cabinet Mission's statement of 16th May."<sup>14</sup>

At last Jinnah agreed to accept the Viceroy's offer, but the Muslim representatives were not since to their task. This was quite clear from Ghazansfar Ali Khan's statements. Ghazansfar Ali Khan, one of the Muslim League nominees for the Interim Government, delivered a speech at Lahore. Describing the Interim Government as "One of the fronts of the Direct Action Campaign" he said : "We are going into the Interim Government to get a foot-hold to fight for our cherished goal of Pakistan...The Interim Government is one of the fronts of the Direct Action Campaign."<sup>15</sup>

On 14th October Jinnah sent the names of five nominees on behalf of the Muslim League. They were : Liaquat Ali Khan, I.I. Chundrigar, Abdur Rab Nistar, Ghazanfar Ali Khan and Jogendra Nath Mandal. Mandal belonged to the scheduled castes.

In order to make places for these five nominees, the Congress decided that Sarat Chandra Bose, Sir Shafaat Ahmad Khan and Syed Ali Zaheer should retire from the Interim Government.

On October 15 a press communique was issued that the Muslim league had decided to joint the Interim Government ; that in order to make it possible to reform the Cabinet three members had resigned ; and that His Majesty the King had been pleased to appoint the five nominees of the Muslim League to be members of the Interim Government. The distribution of portfolio would be settled later.

Though five Muslim League nominees joined the Government, co-operation between the two main wings was beyond achieving. Though Liaquat Ali claimed that "We have come into the Government with the intention of working in harmony with our other colleagues" but that was in theory only. On the very day the League joined the Government, Pandit Nehru conveyed his misgivings to the Viceroy in this way ; "I think I owe it to you to tell you privately and personally that I regret deeply the choice (of candidates) which the Muslim League has made. That choice itself indicates a desire to have conflicts rather than to work in co-operation. Our past experience does not encourage us to rely on vague and ambiguous phrases ..it is desirable...to be precise....and to know exactly where we stand."<sup>16</sup>

The League nominees converted the Interim Government into an arena of communal conflict. Observed Ispahani, personal envoy of Jinnah to the United States, in a broadcast address at the Forum: "The League's participation in the new Government only means that the struggle for Pakistan will now be carried on within as well as without the Government." They should be there, said Jinnah, as "sentinels" of exclusive

Muslim interests. Pyarelal's comment runs thus: "On the day when the Muslim League was admitted into the Interim Government on the Viceroy's initiative and invitation, the battle of undivided India was irretrievably lost. His Majesty's Government had issued clear instructions that Pandit Nehru having been asked to form the Interim Government, further steps for bringing in the League should be left on the analogy of the Cabinet System entirely to him. Some members of the Cabinet Mission were reported to have expressed surprise afterwards when they learnt that it had been brought in by the Viceroy instead."<sup>17</sup>

If there was any doubt about League's motives in joining the Government, Jinnah set these at rest in mid-November: "We shall resist anything that militates against the Pakistan demand," he said. League Ministers were instructed to oppose any Government action of substance which prejudiced this goal. Then, as if to taunt the Congress, he denied the existence of a species called Indian.

Having stated that the atmosphere in the Interim Government, after the League's entry, had become so strained that Congress members had twice threatened to resign, Nehru declared "our patience is fast reaching the limit...if things continue (on the same basis) a struggle on a large scale is inevitable." He further charged Lord Wavell with failure to carry on the Interim Government in the spirit in which he had stated it. "(Wavell) is gradually removing the wheels of the car and this is leading to a critical situation."<sup>18</sup>

According to Nehru, the Muslim League ever since had entered the Interim Government, it had pursued its aim to enlist British support. He had written to Jinnah that difference between the Congress and League in the Interim Government should be settled by themselves, without the Viceroy's intervention. But noted Nehru, "There is a mental alliance between the senior British officials."

On November 25, 1946 Jinnah said of Nehru's insistence that the Viceroy's Executive Council be termed as Cabinet: 'little things please little mind and you cannot turn a monkey into an

elephant by calling it an elephant."<sup>19</sup> In this way the verbal fencing went on between the Congress and the League. The Viceroy, unfortunately, failed sufficiently to clarify matters. The Viceroy could and should have made the position clear.

### London Conference

There seemed to be no way out. At this point, Attlee issued an invitation executed through the Viceroy to "two representatives of the Congress, two from the League, and one Sikh, to confer in London in an effort to reconcile the warring parties. Nehru and the working Committee, sensing a trap were not in a mood to attend the London Conference. Nehru thought that such Conference might re-open the whole Constitutional question and further that the London Conference would be fruitless. He further thought that if he would go to London the preparation of the Constituent Assembly would be delayed, which was scheduled to meet on 9 December. As an alternative he proposed a Conference in Delhi. Attlee assured Nehru however, that there was no intention of abandoning either the Constituent Assembly's decision to meet, or the plan advanced by the Cabinet Delegation; that it was his Government's desire to implement the plan in full.

Attlee, at the same time, assured Jinnah that there was nothing in the plan to "Prejudice full consideration of all points of view." The British Prime Minister's pledges to Nehru and Jinnah seemed to contradict each other, but neither was aware of this at the time.

Attlee announced that Lord Wavell, Nehru, Liaquat Ali Khan and Sardar Baldev Singh were to arrive in London to confer "in an effort to save the Cabinet Mission Plan."

Nehru agreed to attend the Conference in order to leave the door open for the League to enter the Constituent Assembly. Rejection of the London invitation might have given an opportunity to the British to change or withdraw the May 16th Cabinet Mission plan, whereupon the Constituent Assembly might have been radically changed. Again, according to Nehru, Congress decided to participate in the London Conference in

order not to "add to our enemies", or be accused in any way of rejecting the British plan to transfer power.<sup>20</sup>

The London Conference continued for four days but the deadlock could not be removed. On 6th December, a declaration was made, which went in favour of the league. According to this, provinces would be compelled to meet in Groups; they could still opt out of the Groups but only after the first election under the new Group Constitutions. The Congress was urged to accept this interpretation. The Congress was disinclined to accept this. The declaration of December formally destroyed the Cabinet Mission plan. This announcement acted as a green light to the League to persist in the demand for Pakistan. This declaration, as Prof. Michael Brecher has called, killed the plan, invited Jinnah to stand fast and spelled the doom of a united India.<sup>21</sup>

Nehru was perturbed by this turn of events. The London declaration was a blow to him. He said, "Obstructions were placed in our way; new limitations were mentioned, there was no imagination in the understanding of the Indian problem."

### Notes

1. The Indian Annual Register, 1946, II, p. 42.
2. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru, II, p. 233.
3. Ibid., p. 234.
4. Ibid., p. 243.
5. Ibid., p. 243-44.
6. Pyarelal, Mahatma Gandhi, I, p. 266.
7. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru, II, pp. 244-45.
8. Ibid., p. 245.
9. Sitaramayya, Pattabhi, Congress History, III, Appendix V. The Indian Annual Register, 1946, II, CCXXXV p. 24.
10. Sitaramayya, Pattabhi, Congress History (III) pp. ccxxxv-v.

11. *Ibid* , pp. ccxi-cxxi.
12. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru, II, p. 251.
13. Brecher, Michael, Nehru, p. 322.
14. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru II, p. 259.
15. Pyarelal, Mahatma, I, p. 283.
16. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru, II, p. 260.
17. Pyarelal, Mahatma Gandhi, I, p. 289.
18. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru, II, p. 273.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 274.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 278.
21. Brecher, Michael, Nehru, p. 327.

## THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

The Congress Working Committee had given careful consideration to the statement dated, the 16th May, 1946 issued by the Delegation of the British Cabinet and the Government. The statement issued by the Cabinet Delegation and the Viceroy contained certain recommendations and suggested a procedure for the building up of a Constituent Assembly, which was sovereign in so far as the framing of the Constitution was concerned. In their view it would be open to the Constituent Assembly itself at any stage to make changes and variations.

The procedure for the election of the Constituent Assembly was based on representation in the ratio of one to a million. But the application of this principle appeared to have been overlooked in the case of European members of Assemblies, particularly in Assam and Bengal.

The Constituent Assembly was to consist of 389 members only: (187 from Section A, Section B, 35, and Section C, 70 : total for British India 292, maximum for Indian states 93 and Chief Commissioners' provinces 4).

The Constituent Assembly was formally convened on the 9th December, 1946. The sitting took place in the hall of the Constitution Club which was attached to the constitution house, the place where most of the members of the Constituent Assembly were assigned residential quarters. The Constituent Assembly started its deliberation with Dr Sachhidanand Sinha, the oldest member, as the temporary Chairman. Later Dr. Rajendra Prasad was unanimously elected as President on December 11. All the 74 Muslim League members were absent. The Congress had an overwhelming majority—205 of the 296 seats allotted to British India. After a few meetings on procedural questions Nehru moved the historic Objective Resolution.

This resolution envisaged the Indian Union 'an independent Sovereign Republic' comprising autonomous units with residuary powers, wherein the ideals of social, political and economic democracy would be guaranteed to all sections of the people and adequate safeguards would be provided for minorities and backward communities and areas.

Nehru rose to the occasion with an eloquent address: "We are at the end of an era...and my mind goes back...to the 5,000 years of India's history...All that past crowds upon me and exhilarates me and, at the same time, somewhat oppresses me. Am I worthy of that past? When I think also of the future... standing on this sword's edge of the present between the mightiest past and the mightier future, I tremble a little and feel overwhelmed by this mighty task...Because of all this I find a little difficulty in addressing this House and putting all my ideas before it...And now we stand on the verge of this passing age, trying, labouring, to usher in the new.'

Nehru paid tribute to Gandhi, 'the Father of our Nation.' He declared that the new India would be a democracy. To the resolution proper he attached the aura of the general will duly proclaimed: 'It is a resolution and yet it is something much more than a resolution. It is a declaration. It is a firm resolve. It is a pledge and an undertaking and it is for all of us, I hope, a dedication.' He concluded with a challenge to his people: 'We have just come out of a world war and people talk vaguely and rather wildly of new wars to come.'

"At such a moment is this New India taking birth-renascent, vital, fearless. Perhaps it is a suitable moment....But we have to be clear-eyed at this moment....We have to think to this tremendous prospect and not get lost in seeking small gains for this group or that."<sup>1</sup>

In reply to Churchill's statement that London would not be bound by the decisions of the Constituent Assembly, Nehru stated : "Whatever form of Constitution we may decide (upon) in the Constituent Assembly will become the Constitution of free India—Whether Britain accepts it or not....we have now altogether stopped looking towards London....We cannot and will not tolerate any outside interference."<sup>2</sup>

Further debate on the Objectives Resolution was postponed until mid-January 1947 in an effort to placate the League. The Constituent Assembly reconvened on 23 January. The League did not join the Constituent Assembly. Hence the Assembly proceeded to pass the Objectives Resolution, after Nehru's closing speech.

### **Lord Mountbatten as Viceroy**

The British Government, according to Prime Minister Attlee, was most disturbed by the political tension existing between the Congress and Muslim League. In the hope of improving the situation the principal Members of the Cabinet concluded "that a new personal approach was perhaps the only hope", and that "the need for closer personal contacts with" Indian leaders was paramount.

Thus, in mid-December, Attlee invited Lord Mountbatten to succeed Lord Wavell as Viceroy of India.

Mountbatten did not like to stick to his post for a long time. So he maintained that the earliest possible time-limit should be set for the final transfer of power to India. Finally, after being assured that the transfer of power from Britain to India was definitely to be accomplished within a certain time-limit he accepted Attlee's invitation.

Mosley has given his own explanation, why Lord Mountbatten was chosen as the new Viceroy. He said : "He was an

extremely lively, exciting personality. He had an extra-ordinary faculty for getting on with all kinds of people, as he had shown when he was supremo in South East Asia. He was also blessed with a very unusual wife....He believed in driving things through, by short cuts if there were any."<sup>3</sup>

### Notes

1. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru, II, pp. 278-287.
2. Ibid., p. 287.
3. Mosley, Leonard, British Raj, p. 54.

## SEVEN

### 1947: YEAR OF INDEPENDENCE

Professor Michael Brecher has stated that 1947 was 'a fateful year' in the life of Nehru and in the political history of India. This year marked the end of an era and a venture into the unknown. Early 1947 was a period of upheaval and transition in India. Liberation from foreign rule seemed more attainable than ever before.

On January 15, 1947, Lord Mountbatten's acceptance of the Viceroyalty was finally announced. The British Government accepted the principle of a time-limit with respect to the transfer of power. The second half of 1948 was suggested as a deadline, though Mountbatten liked June 1948. He warned his Government against the danger of giving the impression that he had been appointed to perpetuate the 'Viceroyal' system. Fortunately Attlee also accepted the principle of terminating British rule by a specific date.

The year of decision began with an historic declaration in the House of Commons on 28 February 1947. Attlee made a statement in Parliament announcing His Majesty's Government's definite intention to take the necessary steps peacefully to transfer power into responsible Indian hands by a date not later than June 1948. It wished to hand over its responsibility to authorities established by a Constitution approved by all parties in India in accordance with the Cabinet Mission Plan, but unfortunately there was no clear prospect that such a Constitution and such authorities would emerge. "If then, it should appear that an agreed Constitution would not have been worked out (by a fully representative Constituent Assembly) by June 1948, it would have to consider to whom (the) transfer (of) the powers of the Central Government (should be made) whether as a whole to some form of Central Government for British India, or in some areas to the existing provincial Governments, or in such other way as may seem most reasonable and in the best interests of the Indian people."<sup>1</sup>

Simultaneously with this statement it was announced that Lord Wavell would be succeeded as Viceroy in March by Admiral the Viscount Mountbatten, who would be entrusted with the task of 'transferring to Indian hands responsibility for the Government of British India in a manner that will best ensure the future happiness and prosperity of India.' Lord Wavell's appointment, it was explained had been a war time one, and the opening of this 'new and final phase in India' was the appropriate time to terminate this war appointment. Attlee paid a tribute to Lord Wavell for the devotion and high sense of duty with which he had discharged the high office.

Certainly this speech was a milestone in the Constitutional and Political history of India. Probably, no other British Minister, certainly, not Churchill, possessed that courage, foresight, and sympathy for India which inspired Attlee. Churchill bitterly criticized Attlee's statement and said : "It was a cardinal mistake to entrust the Interim Government to a leader of caste Hindus, Mr. Nehru. He had good reasons to be the most bitter enemy of any connection between India and the British Commonwealth. In handing over the Government of

India to the so-called political classes we are handing over to men of straw, of whom in a few years no trace will remain.... I watch the clattering down of the British Empire with all its glories and all the services it has rendered to mankind."<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Alexander, Minister of Defence replied on behalf of Government : "I do not know whether Mr. Churchill intended an attack on Mr. Nehru but his language was pretty forcible. I must say that while we had cause in the past to regret that Mr. Nehru, in pursuit of his own conscience and in the leadership of his home rule party in India was often willing to go to prison, nevertheless he is the most able, cultured and experienced person now at the head of the Interim Government and I believe that he and his colleagues, if given a fair and reasonable opportunity to co-operate with the other great communities in India, will be capable and willing to lead in bringing India through her present difficulties to one of power, influence, prosperity and peace. We believe, we have done great work of India. We believe, the time has come when Indians must shoulder their responsibilities."<sup>3</sup> The Government motion then was carried without a division and Churchill left the house amidst peals of laughter.

'The New York Herald Tribune' brought the reasons behind the Attlee's decision : "The British decision to leave India may bring the British more profit than they would win if they would scrap up power to remain for a time. Their tenure there it must be granted, would be short under almost any conditions that can now be foreseen."<sup>4</sup>

Pandit Nehru's immediate reaction was unqualified approval. Speaking on behalf of the Congress members of the Interim Government, he hailed Attlee's statement as 'a wise and courageous decision'.

"The clear and definite declaration that the final transference of power will take place by a date not later than June 1948, not only removes all misconceptions and suspicion, but also brings reality and a certain dynamic quality to the present situation in India....It is a challenge to all of us and we shall try to meet it bravely in the spirit of that challenge." In a private letter to Gandhi on February 24, 1947, he was less-

exuberant but still favourably disposed : "Mr. Attlee's Statement contains much that is definite and likely to give trouble. But I am convinced that it is in the final analysis a brave and definite statement. It meets our oft-repeated demand for quitting India....Matters will move swiftly now or at any rate after Mountbatten comes.<sup>5</sup> Of all the Congress leaders only Gandhi clearly perceived its meaning. This may lead to Pakistan for those provinces or portions which may want it," he cautioned Nehru. 'No one will be forced one way or the other.'<sup>6</sup>

The statement of 20 February was a logical continuation of the declaration of 6 December. It paved the way for partition. Attlee's declaration gave promise to disruptionists that the British Government would not have objections to transferring their authority to more than one Government. It remained for Mountbatten to execute the withdrawal of British power from India.

Attlee's statement concerning the summary dismissal of Wavell took a controversial shape. Churchill put several questions to Attlee relating to Wavell's dismissal but Attlee evaded their reply. However, it was known that the Viceroy had prepared a two-stage military evacuation plan, known as operation Ebb-Tide. It was a plan which, contained the fundamental admission that Britain's day in India was drawing to a close. It was a scheme to withdraw British troops and British administration stage by stage from India. According to this Englishmen were to move from where they were by stages right up through the Ganges valley till eventually, they would be collected at Karachi and Bombay and then sail away to England. Thus independence would have come to the country through the two stages. Accordingly to Mosley, it was not a workable plan but it would have saved hundreds of thousands of lives. Attlee rejected the plan and wrote that it was politically unfeasible and would require revision. Wavell refused and hence he was dismissed.

### **Proposal to Divide the Punjab**

Churchill had called Attlee's statement as a 'shameful flight, a premature hurried scuttle'. The Muslim League still

boycotted the Constituent Assembly and tried her utmost to secure control over Muslim majority provinces. In Punjab, violence started and this direct action forced Malik Khizr Hayat Khan's Hindu-Muslim-Sikh Ministry to resign on March 3, 1947. The Governor invited the League to form the Ministry. The next day, the fiery Akali leader, Master Tara Singh, called upon Hindus and Sikhs to be ready for action. He said : "If we can snatch the Government from Britishers no one can stop up from snatching the Government from the Muslims ...We shall not allow the League to exist....we shall rule over them and keep the Government fighting. I have sounded the bugle. Finish the Muslim League."<sup>7</sup>

There were 56 per cent Muslims in Punjab of the total population of 29 million. Communal riots broke out with great virulence all over Punjab . On 4 March, the riot shifted to the streets. On the 5th Jenkins, the Governor was compelled to take over direct administration of the province. Serious rioting broke out in Lahore, Amritsar, Multan, Rawalpindi, Sialkot, and Jullundur. As Prof. Brecher has said that owing to its superior organisation the League army scored a major victory. Within 15 days, official assessment was that 2049 persons had been killed and over 1000 seriously injured. Lord Mountbatten's Press Attaché visiting Rawalpindi stated that the destruction in the Hindu and Sikh quarters was "as thorough as any produced by fire bomb raids in the war...The Muslims of the areas were quite pleased with themselves."<sup>8</sup>

Sardar Patel felt that the British officials did not like to prevent the outbreaks. The Interim Government lacked unity of purpose. The Viceroy also could not improve the situation. So Sardar Patel came to this conclusion that unless the Punjab was partitioned, chaos and anarchy would spread throughout the land. There was a growing feeling even among Congress leaders "that the alternative to partition was chaos." So the Congress Working Committee took a realistic view and agreed with him on March 8th, it resolved that :

"During the past seven months India has witnessed many horrors and tragedies which have been enacted in the attempt to gain political ends by brutal violence, murder and coercion.

The tragic events have demonstrated that there can be no settlement of the problem in the Punjab by violence and coercion, and that no arrangement based on coercion can last. Therefore it is necessary to find a way which amounts to the best compulsion. This would necessitate division of the Punjab into two provinces so that the predominantly Muslim part may be separated from the predominantly non-Muslim part.”<sup>9</sup>

The question inevitably arises: Could Congress totally have avoided either communal violence or partition? The Interim Government could not check communal trouble and partition appeared to be only alternative. But this does not mean that Nehru accepted in principle the partition of the entire sub-continent. Nehru spoke of the proposal to divide the Punjab on March 25. Although in his speeches, Nehru publicly belittled the brutalities being committed in the Punjab in order to calm the populace it nevertheless was necessary to face what was occurring as stark reality. The speech was as follows: “About our proposal to divide (the) Punjab, this flows naturally from our previous decisions. These were negative previously, but now a time for decision has come and merely passing of resolutions giving expression to our views means little. I feel convinced and so did most of the Members of the (Congress) Working Committee that we must press for this immediate division so that reality might be brought into the picture.”<sup>10</sup>

### Notes

1. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru, II, p. 303.
2. The Indian Annual Register, 1947, I, pp. 173-176.
3. Ibid., pp. 177-181.
4. Ibid., p. 108.
5. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru, II, p. 305.

6. Pyarelal, Mahatma, I, p. 566.
7. Punjabi, K.L. The Indomitable Sardar, p. 122.
8. Quoted in *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.* p. 123.
10. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru, II, p. 309.

## **EIGHT**

### **MOUNTBATTEN'S 'DICKIE BIRD PLAN'**

At this stage, India was fortunate in having a change of Viceroy. Viscount and Viscountess Mountbatten arrived in New Delhi on 22 March 1947, and were installed as the last Viceroy and Vicereine of India forty-eight hours later. Lord Wavell was unequal to the task of effecting peaceful transfer of power, as desired by the Labour Government. Lord Mountbatten had brought to this task a fresh mind, tremendous drive and a habit of taking quick decisions. His friendly approach and sincerity of purpose enabled him to play a very vital role in restoring peace and tranquility to India. To Lady Mountbatten India owes a debt of gratitude for the noble relief work undertaken by her.

Immediately after his arrival, Mountbatten had interviews with Gandhi, Jinnah, Nehru, Liaquat Ali Khan and Patel. From the outset he was driven to Nehru whom he had met in Malaya in 1946.

During his first interview with Mountbatten on March 25, 1947, Nehru reviewed the major developments that had occurred

since the arrival of the Cabinet Mission of 1946. Mountbatten considered Nehru's account substantially accurate, that it "tallied with information he had gathered in London." In Nehru's view, Wavell had made one serious blunder in inviting the Muslim League to come to the Interim Government instead of waiting a little longer for them to ask to be brought in.

When Mountbatten asked Nehru his estimate of Jinnah, Nehru replied that the essential thing to realise was that Jinnah was a man [to whom success had come very late in life, at over sixty.

Before that, said Nehru, Jinnah "had not been a major figure in Indian politics. He was a successful lawyer, but not an especially good one. The secret of his success was in his capacity to take up a permanently negative attitude."

When Mountbatten inquired what he considered the biggest single problem facing India, Nehru replied at once, "the economic one."

In Mountbatten's view, Nehru was extremely frank and fair.

At the end of the interview, as Nehru was about to take his leave, Mountbatten said to him, "Mr. Nehru, I want you to regard me not as the last Viceroy winding up the British Raj, but as the first to lead the way to the new India." Nehru turned, looked intensely moved, smiled and then said, "Now I know what they mean when they speak of your charm being so dangerous."<sup>1</sup>

Thus an intimate relationship was established between Mountbatten and Nehru. He also talked with Jinnah but Jinnah was too cold and aloof. Patel was a man of few words and maintained his contact through his Constitutional Adviser, V.P. Menon. For Gandhi, he had much respect but their outlooks were fundamentally different.

The most striking feature of Mountbatten's diplomacy was the rapidity with which he arrived at decisions. As the result of interviews with several leaders, Mountbatten was at once convinced that the need for a political solution in India was far more pressing than had been clear in London. He came to this

conclusion that the League leader would stick to the demand of Pakistan to the end and that the Congress leaders were more amenable to compromise. He also felt that the Indian situation was rapidly deteriorating into chaos and that the Cabinet Mission plan for a united India would have to be scrapped in favour of partition of the country. Mahatma Gandhi met Mountbatten at Delhi after the 28th March. Mahatma produced a strange plan. He proposed that the Congress-Muslim League deadlock might be solved by a simple solution. The Viceroy should call upon Mr. Jinnah to set up a Government immediately, leaving him to decide whether it should be all Muslims or contain both Muslims and Hindus; and this Government should be allowed an absolutely free hand, with the exception of a viceregal power of veto, to rule India. Though the Viceroy did not like this plan, but he replied at once that he found the plan "attractive". But this plan was rejected by the Congress Working Committee. Mahatma Gandhi was shocked and he informed the Congress Working Committee that he would take no further part in the discussions with the Viceroy.

By mid-April Mountbatten had begun to evolve a plan that he hoped would resolve existing difficulties in India. He also came to this conclusion that a united India could be maintained only as a result of a bitter and costly<sup>2</sup> civil war. The broad-basis of the plan was the demission of authority to the provinces, or to such confederations of provinces as might decide to group themselves in the intervening period before the actual transfer of power. The plan had adopted a special method in Bengal and the Punjab.

The plan also had made an arrangement for the holding of an election in the North-west Frontier province to ascertain the wishes of the people of that province.

This plan was circulated a few days later to the Governors of India's eleven provinces who had been summoned to Delhi for a Conference with the Viceroy.<sup>3</sup> The Governors, except Sir Fredrick Burrows, Governor of Bengal, accepted this plan. Mountbatten was satisfied and 1 June 1948 was proclaimed as the date when power would be handed over to the Indians. The

British Parliament approved this date. This plan had been prepared by Mountbatten with the help of Lord Ismay, the Chief of Staff, Sir Eric Mieville, Second-in-Command and Mr. George Abell, a distinguished scholar and triple Blue whose knowledge of India and Indians was great. Mountbatten, Ismay, Mieville and Abell formed a tight circle. They were very intimate and were known as 'the Dickie Birds' and so this plan was called at "The Dickie Bird Plan". The defect of the 'Dickie Bird Plan' was that it was an all-British plan and no Indian leaders had been consulted at the time of the drawing up of this plan. Even Mr. V.P. Menon, the Reforms Commissioner had been excluded. It would have been better for the future of the plan, if V.P. Menon would have been taken into confidence. Though he had not been consulted he had learnt about this plan. He had been opposed to this plan.

On 2 May 1947 Mountbatten's Chief of Staff, Lord Ismay accompanied by George Abell departed for London with 'Dickie Bird Plan' for Indian independence.

This Draft Plan was, in fact, an adaptation of the Cabinet Mission Plan. According to this plan, power was to be transferred unilaterally without the willing consent of the party leaders, and with a federal rather than a strong Central Government. The main defect of the plan was that neither the Congress nor the Muslim League had seen the 'Dickie Bird Plan' and so the plan was doomed to failure.

Thus within a month of his arrival Mountbatten came to this conclusion that the partition was the only solution of the problem. Perhaps the Viceroy had prepared the 'Dickie Bird Plan' with this hope that the Congress would accept the plan. The Congress leaders were reconciling themselves to the partition formula gradually. In a speech to the All-India States People's Conference on 18 April Nehru declared : 'The Congress.... have recently on practical consideration passed a resolution accepting the division of the country, presumably referring to the Working Committee Resolution of 8 March.' Later in a public speech on 20 April, Nehru declared : "The

Muslim League can have Pakistan, if they wish to have it, but on the condition that they do not take away other parts of India which do not wish to join Pakistan."<sup>4</sup> But perhaps the more authoritative pronouncement was that made by Dr. Rajendra Prasad, President of the Constituent Assembly, when the Assembly met on 28 April : "While we have accepted the Cabinet Mission's Statement of May 16, 1946, which contemplated a Union of the different provinces and states within the country, it may be that the Union may not comprise all provinces. If that unfortunately comes to pass, we shall have to be content with a Constitution for a part of it.

"In that case, we can and should insist that one principle will apply to all parts of the country and no Constitution will be forced upon any unwilling part of it. This may mean not only the division of India, but a division of some provinces. For this we must be prepared and the Assembly may have to draw up a Constitution based on such a division."<sup>5</sup> Jinnah issued a statement that the partition of Bengal and the Punjab was 'a sinister move actuated by spite and bitterness.' The Sikhs had not raised any voice of protest against the partition of the Punjab. Rather they welcomed this idea. Bhimsen Sacchar and Sardar Swaran Singh had agreed in principle for the partition of the Punjab.<sup>6</sup>

While Mountbatten had been thinking about the fate of his plan, Mahatma Gandhi came to Delhi on March 31. He had come from Bengal, where he heard of the changed trend of Congress thinking on the question of partition. But now it was too late, Nehru and Patel were in favour of partition, though Nehru admitted to Gandhi that partition was 'tragic and evil'. As Maulana Azad had mentioned that he had an interview with Mahatma Gandhi and Mahatma Gandhi expressed his reaction on partition in this way: 'If the Congress wishes to accept partition, it will be over my dead body. So long as I am alive, I will never agree to the partition of India. Nor will I, if I can help it, allow Congress to accept it.'<sup>7</sup> Mahatma Gandhi also sought an interview with the Viceroy and pleaded with him to fight at all costs for a unitary India and to revise

the Cabinet Mission Plan once more. Mountbatten told him that it was out of his hands and that his only hope was to convince Mr. Jinnah and the Muslim League.

So under the inspiration of the Viceroy Gandhi and Jinnah met at Jinnah's house in Aurengzeb Road, New Delhi on 6 May, 1947. The talk lasted for three hours but it proved a failure. Jinnah liked partition of the country but Mahatma Gandhi opposed this.

As it was summer season, the Viceroy left for the Vice-regal lodge in Simla.<sup>8</sup> The Viceroy had been accompanied by V. P. Menon and Sir Eric Mieville. V. P. Menon met the Viceroy at Simla frequently and one day he narrated his own plan. He told him that he had prepared a plan to divide India. He further told him that in a divided India there would be two Central Governments. Each unit would get independence on the basis of Dominion status. He divulged this sacred fact that Sardar Patel had been impressed with his scheme. When being asked by the Viceroy about his reactions to 'Dickie Bird Plan' he replied that he did not like it. Before his departure for Simla, the Viceroy had invited Nehru over for talks. Nehru accompanied by V. K. Menon, went to Simla on May 8th. V. P. Menon discussed his plan on 9 May and a formal meeting was held on 10 May in the presence of the Viceroy. The Viceroy gave an opportunity to Menon explaining his plan in some detail to himself and Pandit Nehru. The broad outlines of the scheme were that Muslim majority areas should be separated from India. The transfer of power should then be made to two Central Governments, one Pakistan, one Hindustan each having its own Governor-General. Pending the drafting of a Constitution by the respective Constituent Assemblies, the Interim Constitution for each of the two Dominions should be based on the Government of India Act of 1935, suitably adopted.

Nehru liked the plan but with great reluctance. 'You must realize' he said 'that there is an overwhelming opinion in India in favour of complete independence. The words "Dominion Status" are likely to irritate people because of their past

association. I know that in theory it can be shown that Dominion Status is equivalent to complete independence, but with such fine points are not, however, understood by the people."<sup>9</sup> One thing was clear from the discussion that the Congress might accept the vivisection of the country, if a plan was prepared. But how could that be? The Viceroy had sent another plan known as 'Dickie Bird Plan' to London for approval. The Viceroy had for a time banished Menon's plan and had been waiting eagerly for the return of his plan.

The plan came back from London on May 10, with the British Government's suggested alterations. Now an announcement was made by the Viceroy's Press Adviser, Campbell-Johnson that an important meeting would be held in New Delhi on the morning of 17th May 1947.<sup>10</sup> It was also issued to the effect that the Viceroy had invited Nehru, Jinnah, Patel, Liaquat Ali Khan and Baldeo Singh to meet him on the morning of 17 May. 'On that morning' the announcement said, 'the Viceroy will present to the five leaders the plan which His Majesty's Government has approved for the transfer of power to Indian hands.' The Viceroy thought that he would show this plan to Nehru before the Conference.

On the night of 10 May Lord Mountbatten showed Nehru the plan. Nehru turned it down most vehemently and made it clear that the Congress would in no circumstances accept it.

Nehru later sent a note to the Viceroy embodying his views. The note, in the drafting of which V. K. Krishna Menon had taken a leading part, threw significant light how Nehru reacted to this plan. This note called the plan a threat to future Indo-British relations and said "Instead of producing any sense of certainty, security and stability, they (the proposals) would encourage disruptive tendencies everywhere and chaos and weakness. They would particularly endanger important strategic areas....The proposal that each of the successor states should conclude independent treaties, presumably also with His Majesty's Government, is likely to create many 'ulsters' in India which will be looked upon as so many British bases on Indian soil....The acquiescence on the part of the Congress in the splitting up of those areas which were predominantly

League in their loyalty was in no wise an acquiescence in throwing overboard the all-India basis of future settlement.”<sup>11</sup>

Mountbatten was perturbed but he did not lose courage. He asked V. P. Menon to prepare his own plan. A Press Communiqué was announced that : “Owing to the imminence of the Parliamentary recess in London, it has been found necessary to postpone H. E. the Viceroy’s meeting with the Indian leaders announced to begin on Saturday 17th May to Monday June 2nd.”<sup>12</sup> As directed by the Viceroy, Menon prepared the Draft plan exactly in four hours, which was approved by Nehru.

Lord Mountbatten returned to Delhi on May 14. He received an invitation from the British Government to go to U.K. for final discussion and he eventually agreed to go to London.

On May 18 1947 Lord and Lady Mountbatten accompanied by V. P. Menon started for London. Ismay and Abell still preferred his own plan. But Mountbatten allowed that plan to die and in its stead discussed Menon’s plan with the Government. The British Government accepted Menon’s plan exactly in five minutes. The partition of the country was now a settled fact. The statement laid down that the provincial legislative assemblies of Bengal and the Punjab should meet in two parts, one representing the Muslim majority districts and the other the rest of the province. The members of the two parts of the legislative Assembly sitting separately would be empowered to vote whether or not the province should be partitioned.

It was decided that Lord Mountbatten should present this plan to the Indian leaders on 2nd June. Lord Mountbatten and party returned to India on 31 May 1947.

**Notes**

1. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru II, p. 317.
2. Ibid., p. 318.
3. The Indian Annual Register, 1947, I, p. 56.
4. Brecher, Michael, Nehru, p. 345.
5. Quoted in V.P Menon's book The Transfer of Power, p. 355
6. The Indian Annual Register, 1947, I, p. 59.
7. Ibid, M.A.K. India Wins Freedom, p. 186
8. Mosley, Leonard, British Raj, p. 116.
9. Quoted in Leonard Mosley's book British Raj, pp. 120-29.
10. The Indian Annual Register, 1947, I, p. 64.
11. George, T.J.S., Krishna Menon, pp. 146-147.
12. The Indian Annual Register, 1947, I, p. 65.

## NINE

### THE MOUNTBATTEN PLAN

During Lord Mountbatten's absence in England a new complication had arisen. Jinnah demanded an eight-hundred-mile corridor that would link an East and a West Pakistan. Congress leaders strongly opposed this demand. Pandit Nehru characterised this demand, in his statement of May 24, 1947 as fantastic and absurd. The statement went on "we stand for a union of India with the right to particular areas to opt out...we envisage no compulsion. If there is no proper settlement on this basis without further claims being advanced, then we shall proceed with making and implementing the Constitution for the union of India."<sup>1</sup>

Another complication came from the attitude of Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi was still opposed to the partition of the country. He said : "let it not be said that Gandhi was a party to India's independence. Congress has practically decided to accept partition. They have been handed a wooden loaf in this new plan. If they eat it, they die of colic. If they leave

it, they starve."<sup>2</sup> Mahatma Gandhi came from Bihar and met with the Viceroy. But it was an ineffective interview.

On June 2, at the Viceroy's House, was held the historic conference attended by the seven leaders—Nehru, Patel and Kripalani on behalf of the Congress; Jinnah, Liaquat Ali Khan and Abdur Rab Nishtar on behalf of the League, and Baldeo Singh representing the Sikhs.<sup>3</sup>

Baldeo Singh did not seem to be aware that he would shortly be the meat in the sandwich that was being cut. Sir Eric Mieville and Lord Ismay were also present behind the table. V. P. Menon, author of the plan was absent.

The Viceroy opened the Conference by explaining that during the last five years he had taken part in a number of momentous meetings at which the fate of the war had been decided; but he could remember no meeting at which the decisions taken could have such a profound influence on world history as those which were to be taken now. The way in which power was transferred would affect not only India, but the whole world. The Viceroy having made his last formal attempt of calling on the assembled leaders to accept the Cabinet Mission Plan but Jinnah rejected it. Mountbatten then proposed his own plan for partition.

In essence the Mountbatten plan provided a procedure to ascertain the will of the people living in those areas claimed for Pakistan. In Bengal, Sindh and the Punjab the issue was to be determined by the provincial legislatures. But in Bengal and the Punjab the Assemblies would divide into two sections, representing the Muslim-majority and non-Muslim-majority districts respectively. If either section favoured partition of the province this would be a final verdict; if both decided to remain united, the legislature would vote on which Constituent Assembly it wished to join. In the Frontier there was to be a referendum. Similarly, the Muslim majority Sylhet district of Assam would hold a referendum. The Plan also indicated a willingness to transfer power before the specified final date of June 1948. This would be on a Dominion Status basis and the successor (s) could decide, through their Constituent

Assembly (Assemblies) whether or not to stay in the Commonwealth. By the end of the first meeting, the Viceroy had already extracted a tentative promise from Nehru, Jinnah and Baldeo Singh that they would go on the radio and urge their communities to support the plan.

Jinnah made fresh demand. He wanted a referendum for independence in Bengal but that was rejected by the Viceroy.

The only delegate who did not say a word, was Baldeo Singh. Baldeo Singh accepted the plan without any protest. Perhaps Baldeo Singh did not understand the significance of the plan. Under this plan, Punjab would be partitioned and the Sikhs would suffer heavily. But Baldeo Singh was not a far-seeing Sikh. As Morley has commented : "Baldeo Singh, who was never one of the most brilliant minds produced by his people, did not seem to realize what this was going to mean...It might have seemed likely that any far-seeing Sikh, realizing the situation which would probably result from partition, would have cut his throat or gone to war rather than accept it."<sup>4</sup>

The Viceroy pointed out that the plan had been formulated as a result of several talks with the Indian leaders. There had been some small drafting alterations in the statement since it had last been seen by them.

Copies of the statement of His Majesty's Government were then handed round to all leaders. The Viceroy asked of their Working Committees.

Nehru pointed out that he and Patel had been committing themselves to the present plan. But Nehru said that a letter would be sent to the Viceroy that evening giving an account of the Congress Working Committee's reaction to the statement.

Jinnah said that he thought he would be successful in obtaining the support of the All-India Muslim League Council. Further, he said that he would not be able to report the views of the Muslim League Working Committee in writing. However, he would come and see the Viceroy and make a verbal report.

The Viceroy mentioned in conclusion that he intended to make a broadcast over All India Radio the following evening. It would be recorded in London and relayed all over the world. He said that he would be most grateful if Nehru and Jinnah would broadcast immediately after him. They might give their personal assurances of support for the plan. Both Nehru and Jinnah agreed. At the same time the Viceroy accepted Nehru's suggestion that Baldeo Singh should also broadcast.

The Congress Working Committee met on 2nd June and considered the new plan. The first point that came for discussion was the future of the North-West Frontier Province. Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, Dr. Khan and their party of Khudai Khidmatgars did not like the Mountbatten Plan, because partition would place them in a most awkward situation. The situation became tense, Gandhi spoke in the Working Committee in favour of partition. Khan Bahadur Gaffar Khan was taken by surprise and he said that the Frontier would regard it as an act of treachery if the Congress now threw the Khudai Khidmatgars to the wolves.<sup>5</sup> Gandhi was moved by the appeal and said that he would raise the matter with the Viceroy. Gandhi told Mountbatten that he would not be able to support the plan for partition till he was satisfied that the Muslim League would deal fairly with the Khudai Khidmatgars. Lord Mountbatten raised this point with Jinnah. So Jinnah and Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan met in Delhi. But no concrete result emerged. The Viceroy suggested that a referendum might be held to decide whether the Frontier would join Pakistan or India. Dr. Khan Sahib was the Chief Minister of the Province. He did not object to the proposal for a plebiscite. He said that if there was to be a plebiscite, the Pathans of the Frontier should have also the right to opt for Pakhtoonistan, a state of their own.

The Congress Working Committee had endorsed the decision of the Frontier Congress authorising Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan to take proper action. The Frontier Congress now demanded the creation of a free Pathan State. Neither Mr. Jinnah

nor Lord Mountbatten was however prepared to accept this demand.

At last the Congress Working Committee decided to accept the plan. Kripalani, the Congress President, wrote a long letter to the Viceroy, in the course of which he said : 'I am desired to say by my Committee that we are prepared to accept it and to recommend to the All-India Congress Committee to do likewise.. This is dependent on the acceptance of the proposals by the Muslim League and a clear understanding that no further claims will be put forward.'<sup>6</sup>

Baldeo Singh, on behalf of the Sikhs, accepted the principle of partition as laid down in the plan, but stressed that care should be taken to meet their demands when framing the terms of reference for the Boundary Commission.

Jinnah however gave a verbal assurance to the Viceroy. The next morning (3 June) the Viceroy's Conference with the leaders was resumed. He acquainted them with the replies he had received from the three political parties. Immediately after his meeting with the party leaders the Viceroy communicated to the Secretary of State the assurance given him by Nehru, Jinnah and Baldeo Singh in regard to the acceptance of the Plan. Attlee, the British Prime Minister announced the plan in the House of Commons on June 3; hence it came to be known as the June 3rd Plan.

Speaking on behalf of the Opposition, Winston Churchill concluded by saying: "The Prime Minister said that credit was due to the Viceroy. There are matters about which it is extremely difficult to form decided opinions now, but if the hopes that are enshrined in this declaration should be born out, great credit will indeed be due to the Viceroy and not only to the Viceroy, but to the Prime Minister who advised the British Government to appoint him."<sup>7</sup>

In a broadcast which the Prime Minister made that night he said : 'As the Indian leaders have finally failed to agree on the Cabinet Mission's plan for a united India, partition becomes the inevitable alternative.'

On the evening of 3 June, the Viceroy made a broadcast over All India Radio. 'For more than a hundred years' said Mountbatten 'hundreds of millions of you have lived together and this country has been administered as a single entity.... It has been impossible to obtain agreement....on any plan that would preserve the unity of India. But there can be no question of coercing any large areas in which one community has a majority to live against their will under a Government in which another community has a majority. The only alternative to coercion is partition.'

Nehru followed and said .. "It is with no joy in my heart that I commend these proposal to you, though I have no doubt in my heart that this is the right course. For generations we have dreamt and struggled for a free, independent and united India. The proposal to allow certain parts to secede if they so will is painful for any of us to contemplate." And of the part played in the struggle by himself and his colleagues, he added: "we are little men serving a great cause but because the cause is great something of that greatness falls upon us also. Mighty forces are at work in the world today and in India and I have no doubt that we are ushering in a period of greatness for India. The India of geography, of history and tradition, the India of our minds and hearts cannot change "<sup>8</sup> He also paid tribute to Gandhiji, who had led the nation unfalteringly for over a generation through darkness and sorrow to the threshold of freedom.

Jinnah was dry and cold. He did not tell anything definite to his radio audience. He said, "It is for us to consider whether the plan as presented to us by His Majesty Government should be accepted by us as a compromise or as a settlement." In the end he uttered 'Pakistan Zindabad'.

Baldeo Singh had no doubt about the plan. This was not a compromise he said, but a settlement, 'It does not please everybody, not the Sikh community, but it is certainly something worthwhile. Let us take it at that.'<sup>9</sup>

Thus the plan was accepted by the leaders. The British Government had also accepted the plan. The Viceroy was

very rapidly moving towards the goal. Everything was settled but the one important thing had not been settled and that was the actual date on which there would be transfer of power. Even Mr. Attlee did not think about the date. That was made clear by the Viceroy in his Press Conference, which he addressed on 4 June. Vallabhbhai Patel was in the chair. He made it clear that the transfer of power would actually be made on August 15th 1947. Mr. Attlee was shocked at this date. But there was no other alternative. Attlee and Churchill had to support Mountbatten because both parties had publicly announced their support for the plan. The draft Bill was finally prepared and August 15th was fixed the appointed date.

Progressive opinion throughout the world praised the Labour Government for its bold decision to give independence to India. Walter Lippman, the famous American political commentator, wrote in the *Washington Post* :

'Perhaps Britain's finest hour is not in the past. Certainly this performance is not the work of a decadent people. This on the contrary is the work of political genius requiring the highest wisdom and the freshest vigour, and it is done with an elegance and a style that will compel and will receive an instinctive respect throughout the civilised world. Attlee and Mountbatten have done a service to all mankind by showing what statesmen can do not with force and money but with lucidity, resolution and sincerity.'<sup>10</sup>

The Council of the All-India Muslim League met in New Delhi on 10 June and passed a resolution noting with satisfaction that the Cabinet Mission Plan had been abandoned. The Council granted Jinnah complete authority to accept the plan, by a vote of 400 to 8 although it could not agree to the partition of Bengal and the Punjab, or give its consent to such partition.

Nehru was too much annoyed with this resolution of the Muslim League Council. He wrote a letter to the Viceroy in which he pointed out that it was wrong to say that the Cabinet Mission Plan had been abandoned, rather it had been modified. He also said that by objecting to the partition of Bengal and

the Punjab, the League had rejected one of the basic provisions in the scheme. At this the Viceroy was in a difficult position. In the end, Lord Mountbatten persuaded Nehru not to take the League Council's resolution at its face value.

Meanwhile, a joint Conference of various Sikh organizations was held in Lahore. Though welcoming the division of the Punjab, the Conference passed a resolution that no partition of the province which did not preserve the solidarity and integrity of the Sikh community would be acceptable to the Sikhs.

The All-India Hindu Mahasabha and the Communist Party opposed the Mountbatten Plan.<sup>11</sup>

The All-India Congress Committee met on 14 June 1947. Shree Jayprakash Narayan and Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia were specially invited to this meeting. Congress, which had always fought for the unity and independence of India, was now considering an official resolution for the division of the country. Pandit Govind Ballav Pant moved the resolution. He said that acceptance of the June 3rd Plan was the only way to achieve freedom and liberty for the country. The resolution was seconded by Maulana Azad and Sardar Patel.

Maulana Azad said that the decision which the Working Committee had reached was the result of a most unfortunate development. Partition was a tragedy for India and the only thing that could be said in its favour was that we had done our best to avoid division, but we had failed. We must not however forget that the nation is one and its cultural life is and will remain one. Politically we had failed and were therefore dividing the country.<sup>12</sup>

Sardar Patel argued that the resolution of the division of the country did not arise out of weakness or compulsion but that it was the only true solution in the existing circumstances in India.

Opposition to the resolution came mostly from Nationalist Muslims, members of the Hindu Minorities and from Purshottamdas Tandon. Shree Tandon said that the decision of the Working Committee was an admission of weakness and

that it arose out of a sense of despair. Accepting the June 3rd Plan would benefit neither the Hindus nor the Muslims.

Pandit Nehru intervened in the debate that there was no question of any surrender to the Muslim League. It was wrong to say that the Congress Working Committee had taken fright and therefore surrendered.

Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan spoke a few words. He expressed his sorrow over the fact that his colleagues had accepted the scheme of partition. As a small mercy, he wanted them to find out if the proposed plebiscite in the North-west Frontier would include the alternative of independence alongside of the two other choices of accession to India or Pakistan.<sup>13</sup>

Shree Jayaprakash Narayan made remarks against partition in a few words only.

According to Lohia, his opposition to partition was persistent and vocal. He opposed the resolution seriously.

After the first day's debate, there was a very strong feeling against the Working Committee's resolution. Hence Mahatma Gandhi intervened in the Congress Working Committee's resolution. He added that he had always opposed partition no one could deny this fact. He felt however that a situation had now been created where there was no alternative. Political realism demanded the acceptance of the Mountbatten plan and he would appeal to the members to accept the resolution moved by Pandit Pant. Further he told that the consequences of rejection would be the finding of a new set of leaders who would not only be capable of constituting the Congress Working Committee but the taking charge of the Government.<sup>14</sup>

Mahatma Gandhi's speech did its work. The resolution was put to vote and was passed by 153 to 29 at first count and 157 to 29 at second count.<sup>15</sup>

Acharya Kripalani was President of the Indian National Congress at that time. He made a most forceful and memorable speech, in the course of which he answered the charge that the Working Committee had taken the decision out of fear. He said : "I must admit the truth of this charge, but not in

the sense in which it is made. The fear is not for the lives lost, or of the widow's wail, or the orphans cry or of the many houses burned. The fear is that if we go on like this, retaliating and heaping indignities on each other, we shall progressively reduce ourselves to a stage of cannibalism and worse. In every fresh communal fight the most brutal and degraded acts of the previous fight become the norm.”<sup>16</sup>

‘Thus,’ wrote V.P. Menon, ‘was the plan accepted .. But acceptance was one thing; its implementation was a different matter altogether. Here was a task which normally should have taken years to accomplish but which had to be compressed into the short space of a few weeks. It was a task before which anybody would have quailed, for it was one which seemed verily to tempt the Gods.’

### Notes

1. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru II, p. 329
2. Quoted in Leonard Mosley's book "British Raj" p. 128
3. The Indian Annual Register, 1947, I p. 71
4. Mosely, Leonard, British Raj, p. 132
5. Azad, M.A.K , India Wins Freedom, p. 193
6. Menon. V.P. Transfer of Power, pp. 375-376
7. Menon, V.P., Transfer of Power, p. 378.
8. Norman, Dorothy, Nehru II, p. 327
9. Mosley, Leonard, British Raj, p. 134
10. Menon, V.P.. Transfer of Power, p. 74-77
11. The Indian Annual Register, 1947, I. pp. 74-77
12. Maulana A.K, Azad, India Wins Freedom, p. 197.
13. Lohia, Ram Manohar, India's Partition, pp. 9-10.
14. Menon, V.P., Transfer of Power, p. 386.
15. The Indian Annual Register; 1947, I, p. 137.
16. Menon, V.P. Transfer of Power, p. 386.

## THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN

The Mountbatten Plan was officially announced on June 3, after all the parties concerned had approved it. The British rule was to come to an end on August 15, 1947. There was so much to be done within such a limited time. The verdicts of the provinces had to be ascertained. A complex machinery was set up to effect partition. A Partition Council was created consisting of Dr. Rajendra Prasad and Sardar Patel for the Congress, Liaquat Ali and Nishtar, (later replaced by Jinnah) for the Muslim League with Mountbatten as Chairman. A steering Committee had also been set up under two senior Civil Servants, H.M. Patel and Chaudhuri Mohamed Ali. A separate committee to deal with assets was also set up under the Chairmanship of Sir Patrick Spens. Sir Cyril Radcliffe had been sent from London to divide the country.

By the middle of July all the disputed areas had made their choice. Bengal and the Punjab decided in favour of partition, Sindh, the Sylhet District of Assam, and Baluchistan decided to join Pakistan. The referendum in the North-West Frontier

Province was held from 6 to 17 July. Ghaffar Khan's followers had boycotted the referendum. Of the total electorate of 572, 798 slightly over 50 per cent took part—289, 244 voting for, and 2,874 voting against joining a new Constituent Assembly. The consensus of opinion was that a majority would have favoured Pakistan even if the 'Redshirts' had contested the issue.

Amidst these developments the Constitutional formalities were hastily completed in London. The Indian Independence Bill was introduced in the House of Commons by the Prime Minister on 4 July.

On the same date the Secretary of State, Lord Listowel addressed a Press Conference at the India Office and said : "This is a Bill unique in the history of legislation in this country. Never before has such a large portion of the world population achieved complete independence through legislation alone." He went on to say that on 15 August India would achieve complete independence.

The Indian Independence Bill was passed by the House of Commons on 15 July and by the House of Lords on the following day. The Bill received the Royal Assent on 18 July. The Government of India Act, 1935, as modified and adapted, was brought into operation by the India (Provisional Constitution) Order, 1947, made by the Governor-General on 14 August 1947. The Bill in its final form consisted of only twenty clauses and three schedules.

## ELEVEN

### INDIAN INDEPENDENCE ACT

The Act provided for the setting up of two new Dominions on 15 August 1947. Powers hitherto exercised by the British Parliament, and the Government in British India, would be transferred to the two new Dominions, also on August 15. The new Act substituted certain new provisions for previous ones contained in the Government of India Act of 1935.

In the 1947 Independence Act "the territories of the Dominions were defined, with appropriate qualifications for the areas to determine their choice by referendum or by vote of their legislature. Each Dominion was to be headed by a Governor-General, but it was expressly stipulated that one person might serve in a dual capacity, in the hope that Mountbatten would be acceptable to both. The absence of a legally Constituted Parliament in either of the proposed Dominions was overcome by giving both Constituent Assemblies the dual status and function of legislature and Constitution-Making body. The 1935 Government of India Act and its accompanying Orders-in-Council would remain in force (pending alteration

or the drafting of new Constitutions by the successor authorities), subject to the removal of the reserved and special powers vested in the Governor-General and the Provincial Governors. All laws in force in British India on 15 August 1947 would remain in force until amended by the new Dominion legislatures. There was also a provision for continuity in the terms of employment of members of the Services....

"Two provisions of the Act gave rise to vigorous controversy, even before the formal transfer of power, the Governor-Generalship and the Constitutional future of the princely states.

The Congress proposed Mountbatten as Governor-General of the Dominion of India, undoubtedly on the assumption that the League would likewise. To the consternation of many, Jinnah decided to occupy that post in Pakistan. In reality it made little difference to the power pyramid in Pakistan during the first year, for Jinnah remained the dominant personality until his death in September 1948....

"The Muslim League accepted the implied doctrine of freedom of action for the Princes, probably because the few states on the Pakistani side of the border would have no real choice. Moreover, the exercise of such freedom by some of the large Princely states in India, notably Hyderabad, would imperil the territorial integrity and stability of Pakistan's more powerful neighbour. For precisely opposite reasons the Congress rejected the British Government's interpretation of Paramountcy and declared that it would resist territorial fragmentation."

The All-India Congress Committee approved Nehru's strong line by "stating that it could not admit the right of any state in India to declare its independence and to live in isolation from the rest of India".

By default the Indian Independence Act seemed to give the Princes freedom to accede to India or to Pakistan, or to become independent. The vagueness involved with respect to this problem presented difficulties that might well have led to instability and fragmentation.

The 1935 Government of India Act and its accompanying Orders-in-Council would remain in force (pending alteration or the drafting of new Constitutions by the successor authorities), subject to the removal of the reserved and special powers vested in the Governor-General and the provincial Governors.

All laws in force in British India on 15 August 1947 would remain in force until amended by the new Dominion legislatures. There was also a provision for continuity in the terms of employment of members of the Services. Prof Michael Brecher has commented that indeed, the Indian Independence Act was remarkable for the degree to which it assured continuity in political institutions, the legal and judicial system and the Constitutional fabric of British India.<sup>1</sup>

### Notes

1. Brecher, Michael, Nehru, p. 352.

## T W E L V E

### VIVISECTION OF INDIA

The British Government had appointed Sir Cyril Radcliffe to divide the country. He arrived in Delhi on July 8, 1947. Independence day was 15 August. He was to do his job in five weeks. He was the Chairman of the Partition Commission. Besides, two separate boards of four judges had also been constituted to divide the Punjab and Bengal. They were all Indian judges. Under Sir Cyril's guidance, justices C.C. Biswas and B.K. Mukherji (for Congress) and Saleh Mohammed Akran and S.A. Raham (for the Muslim League) would partition Bengal; and justices Mehr Chand Mahajan and Tejah Singh (For Congress) and Din Mohammed and Muhammed Munir (for the Muslim League) would partition the Punjab.

On the evening of his arrival, Sir Cyril was summoned by the Viceroy to meet the Indian leaders. He pointed out that the division of the country would take considerable time. So he wanted to know 'how long had he got.' The Viceroy replied that the partition would be completed in five weeks. Before Sir Cyril Radcliffe could reply, Nehru said; 'If a decision could be

reached in advance of five weeks it would be better for the situation.<sup>1</sup> It was a difficult task to divide the country in such a short time.

Sir Cyril Radcliffe established his main office in Delhi and two sub-headquarters were also established one in Lahore and the other in Bengal. He came to the conclusion that he would have to complete his work alone. In the Punjab, the judges refused to co-operate with him.

The task of division in Bengal was also a difficult affair, because Sir Fredrick Burrows and Mr. Suhrawardy were trying for an independent Bengal. They had approached Britain for its recognition but the British Government had turned out this proposal.

Sir Cyril Radcliffe had been asked to divide India in five weeks. He finished his work and handed over his Award to Mountbatten on 13 August. Mountbatten liked to give copies of the Award to the leaders of the Congress and the Muslim League on the same day but he could not do so, as he was going to Karachi on the 13th. So he handed over the Radcliffe Award to the leaders on August 17.

The Congress had claimed for West Bengal about fifty-nine per cent of the area and forty-six per cent of the population of the province. Under the Radcliffe Award, only thirty-six per cent of the area and thirty-five per cent of the population were assigned to West Bengal. Of the total Muslim population of Bengal only sixteen per cent came under West Bengal, while as many as forty-two per cent of non Muslims remained in East Bengal.<sup>2</sup>

The Congress claimed for East Punjab all that portion of the province east of the river Chenab. The Sikhs supplemented the Congress claims by asking for a few more districts such as Montgomery and Lyallpur and certain sub-divisions of the Multan division. The Muslim League also liked not only the three complete divisions of Rawalpindi, Multan and Lahore but also a number of tehsils in the Jullundur and Ambala divisions. The Radcliffe Award allocated to East Punjab only thirteen

districts, comprising the whole of the Jullundur and Ambala divisions, the Amritsar district of the Lahore division, and certain tehsils of the Gurudaspur and Lahore districts.

East Punjab obtained control over three of the five rivers of the united Punjab, namely the Beas, Sutlej and the Upper waters of the Ravi. About thirty-eight per cent of the area and forty-five per cent of the population were assigned to East Punjab. West Punjab, on the other hand, obtained sixty-two per cent of the area and fifty-five per cent of the population. The Hindus of the Punjab, especially the Sikhs, bitterly resented the loss of Lahore and the Canal colonies of Sheikhpura, Lyallpur and Montgomery, while the Muslims protested against the retention of the Mandi Hydro-electric project by East Punjab.

So the Radcliffe Award satisfied none of the parties. The 'Hindusthan Standard' of Delhi censured it as "self-contradictory, anomalous and arbitrary" and as unjust to the Hindus of Bengal and the Punjab. The 'Dawn,' the Muslim League organ declared that Pakistan had been cheated; that the Award was biased decision, an act of shameful partiality.<sup>3</sup> The Sikhs criticized the Award as unjust to the Sikhs. The Award was, however, accepted by all the parties concerned because everyone began to feel the futility of these protests.

### Notes

1. Mosley, Leonard, British Raj, p. 195
2. Menon, V.P., Transfer of Power, 403
3. Rai, Satya M., Partition of Punjab, pp. 57-58.

## THIRTEEN

### THE BIRTH OF TWO DOMINIONS— PAKISTAN—WHY?

At mid-night, on August 14-15, 1947,<sup>1</sup> India attained her freedom, to the accompaniment of tumultuous demonstrations. Simultaneously, the new state of Pakistan was created. The Union Jack, which had flown night and day since 1847 from the residency at Lucknow, was brought down on the evening of August 13, 1947, and sent to Field Marshal Auchinleck. The air throbbed with excitement in Delhi. The ceremonial arches were all up now and flags flew everywhere.

Mid-night came and 182 years of the British rule in India came to an end.

There were certain factors which were responsible for the vivisection of the country. The British Government were under this impression since 1940 that India would achieve independence sooner or later. Rabindra Nath Tagore had issued this statement on April 14, 1941 and subsequent events proved this. The statement ran in this way : “The wheels of fate will some-

day compel the English to give up their Indian Empire. But what kind of India will they leave behind, what stark misery ! When the stream of their century's administration runs dry at least what a waste of mud and filth they will leave behind them.”<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps there were two reasons for the establishment of Pakistan :—(1) Muslim communalism and (2) British policy of “Divide and rule.” The Muslim League had come into existence in 1906 and through an historic masterstroke of British diplomacy the Indian Muslims had succeeded to achieve separate electorates for themselves in the Morley-Minto Reforms (1909). These safeguards proved as a disintegrating factor ultimately culminating in the partition of the country. Gradually Mr. Jinnah, once an Ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity, was swept away to a level of narrow communalism and he became the leader of the Muslim League. This separatist feelings of Muslims was provided with an emotional vigour and intellectual content by the poet-philosopher Muhammad Iqbal (1876-1938) who undoubtedly wielded a tremendous influence in moulding the destiny of India in general and that of the Indian Muslims in particular.<sup>3</sup>

On March 23-24, 1940, the Muslim League at its Lahore Session passed a resolution for the proposal of the partition of the country. Sir Stafford Cripps acknowledged the possibility of a division of India in 1942. The Cabinet Mission also indirectly accepted the proposal of Pakistan in its recommendation. Prime Minister Attlee made his announcement on February, 20 1947 indicating that the transfer of power would be made into responsible Indian hands by a date not later than June 1948. Mahatma Gandhi said at this announcement : “This may lead to Pakistan for those provinces or portions which may want it.” The statement of February 20, 1947 was a logical continuation of the declaration of December 6, 1946. Whether or not so intended, it paved the way for partition.<sup>4</sup> The prevalent feeling in London by February 1947 seemed to be that Pakistan was the only way out of the impasse. The opposition party called Attlee’s plan of February 20, 1947 as ‘Operation Scuttle’. Thus Attlee’s statement contained within

it the germs of pakistan. For six years the forces of Nationalism had been fighting the forces of separatism, the alien state throwing its whole weight on the side of the latter.

The 'New York Herald-Tribune' brought the reasons out behind the Attlee's decision : "The British decision to leave India may bring the British more profit than they would win if they could scrap up power to remain for a time."<sup>6</sup> The British plans, embodied in the 1946 statement of policy to be found in the Cabinet Delegation's findings and in Mr. Attlee's statement of February 20, 1947 were all based on the idea that the sovereignty over the country must be distributed between Hindu and Muslim majority area.<sup>7</sup> The British imperialism weakened India. Thus the parting gift of British imperialism has weakened India's power for good, for playing the role that geography and history have prepared for her.

Lord Wavell's weakness towards the Muslim League also brought Pakistan within the realm of possibility. With the entrance of Muslim League nominess into the Interim Government, collective responsibility totally disappeared. Wavell was inclined towards the Muslim League representatives. Pandit Nehru issued his statement on November 21, 1946 in this way : "He (Lord Wavell) is gradually removing the car, that there is a mental alliance between the League and senior British officials."<sup>8</sup> The League representatives attempted to break up the unity of the Interim Government and they preferred Muslims in their departments. Muslim League nominess appointed only Muslims to the key post. This was published in the 'Amrita Bazar Patrika' in May 1947. Sardar Abdur Rab Nishtar, Communication Minister, imported Muslims into his department. He appointed Muslims in Delhi Telephone system by replacing the European, Hindu and Sikh Officers. Colonel N.W. Hardwood, District Manager, Delhi Telephone was replaced by Muhammad Hussain on April 29, 1947. P. Srinivasan Administrative Officer was replaced by Ghulam Abbas, Chanan Singh, Assistant Engineer Trunk Exchange was replaced by Khalil Ahmad.<sup>9</sup>

The result of all these activities was that the Interim Government could not work smoothly. Pandit Nehru and

Sardar Patel were annoyed at this disruptionist policy of the Muslim League. Sardar Patel expressed his opinion in this way : "I came to the conclusion that the best course was to hasten the departure of these foreigners even at the cost of the partition of the country. It was also then that I felt that there was one way to make the country safe and strong, and that there was the unification of the rest of India". Speaking at the Convocation of the Benares Hindu University on November 25, 1948 Sardar Patel said : "I felt that, if we did not accept partition, India would be split into many units and would be completely ruined. My experience of office for one year convinced me that the way we have been proceeding would lead us to disaster. We would not have one 'Pakistan' but several. We would have 'Pakistan' cells in every office."<sup>9</sup>

Thus the Congress was slowly coming to this conclusion that the partition of the country was the only choice left to the Congress. Attlee's declaration gave promise to disruptionists that the British Government would not have objections to transferring their authority to more than one Government. The administration of the country had broken down. Lord Ismay has made it clear that while in London he had felt that the date fixed June 1948 was far too early. When he reached Delhi he found that it was too late. The Administration was creaking, the communal bitterness was far more intense both at headquarters in Delhi and in the provinces than anything I would have imagined.<sup>10</sup>

Lord Ismay further told : "I do not suppose that in the history of the world there has even been a coalition so determined not to co-operate with each other. They were all unanimous that this system could not continue much longer, without the greatest injury to the country as a whole". With the characteristic British pose of impartiality, Lord Ismay could not apportion credit or blame to any of the parties forming the coalition. The British Government did not try to remove this deadlock. The Britishers ended the deadlock by dividing the country.

We do not know when, on what particular day of what month the leaders of the Congress and the Muslim League

agreed to accept the deed of disruption. It appears that by the end of the third week of April 1947, the main lines of the policy had been settled. The London socialist weekly in its issue of April 24, indicated these in an article. The special correspondent of the 'Lahore Tribune' threw more light on the details of the affair in its dispatch of April 27. It was mentioned that Lord Mountbatten made the Indian leaders more sharply aware of the realities of the immediate future. Hence the Congress recognized that some form of Pakistan would have to be offered to the Muslim League by June 1948. According to the 'Lahore Tribune' Pandit Nehru came out with a 'blunt' statement that the Muslim League can have their Pakistan, provided that they do not take more than they are strictly entitled to on the population basis. This meant partition of the Punjab and Bengal, with loss of Calcutta to the Muslims.<sup>11</sup>

So by April 1947, the battle for Indian unity had been lost. Curiously enough, on April 30, Mr. Jinnah characterised the demand for the division of the Punjab and Bengal as a 'sinister move' actuated by spite and bitterness. But Jinnah had forgotten that the partition of the Punjab, Bengal and Assam had been mentioned in clause (6) of their statement of May 16th, 1946. Dr. Rajendra Prasad made a sharp reply : 'If division has to come and Mr. Jinnah insists that it should come, then it should be as complete and thorough-going as possible.<sup>12</sup>

To Michael Brecher, his biographer, Pandit Nehru confessed in 1956 : "Well, I suppose it was the compulsion of events and the feeling that we could not get out of that deadlock or morass by pursuing the way we had done; it became worse and worse. Further, a feeling that even if we got freedom for India, with that background, it would be a very weak India, that is, a federal India with far too much power in the federating units. A larger India would have constant troubles, constant disintegrating pulls. And also the fact that we saw no other way of getting our freedom-in the near future, I mean. And so we accepted and said, let us build up a strong

India And if others do not want to be in it, well, how can we and why should we force them to be in it.”<sup>13</sup>

In a moment of reflection, almost a year after the partition, Nehru stated : ‘We consented because we thought that thereby we were purchasing peace and good will, though at a high price ..I do not know now, if I had the same choice, how I would decide.”<sup>14</sup>

But perhaps Pandit Nehru came nearer the truth in a conversation with Mosley Leonard in 1960 when he said :

“The truth is that we were tired men and we were getting on in years too. Few of us could stand the prospect of going to prison again and if we had stood out for a united India as we wished it, prison obviously awaited us. We saw the fires burning in the Punjab and heard every day of the killings. The plan for partition offered a way out and we took it.”<sup>15</sup>

He added : ‘But if Gandhi had told us not to, we would have gone on fighting, and waiting, but we accepted. We expected that partition would be temporary, that Pakistan was bound to come back to us. None of us guessed how much the killings and the crisis in Kashmir would embitter relations.”

Pt. Nehru had reflected further on this issue in this way : ‘I think now, looking back, that partition could have been avoided if the British Government’s policy had been different, about a year or eighteen months before.’<sup>16</sup>

Thus it is clear that Nehru and Patel played a dominant role and they carried the party in favour of partition. Gandhi was opposed to partition and it was ironiictly at, having followed him faithfully for almost thirty years, with very few exceptions, Nehru and Patel should have broken with the ‘Master’ on the most significant issue affecting India in modern history.<sup>17</sup> Nehru was also perturbed at the prevailing madness and he came to this conclusion that partition was better than the murder of innocent citizens. Patel had also thought in the same line that partition would have the way for peace. Nehru also thought that : ‘If they (the League) are forced to stay in the Union, no progress and planning will be possible’.<sup>18</sup>

Besides the distant causes for the partition of the country, which I have discussed at the outset, there were seven immediate causes of the partition.

The Congress leaders believed that with the establishment of Pakistan, the minority problem would be solved forever. They thought that communal problem would not trouble the Indian Union in future.

But that could not be and soon after August 15, 1947 there came riots in the Punjab.

The fear was another compelling factor—fear that a tragic civil war would ravage the sub-continent unless the deadlock were broken swiftly.

It was felt by the Congress leaders that partition would be short-lived. As Prof. Brecher has told that the Congress leaders believed that Pakistan would not be a viable state politically, economically, geographically or militarily and that sooner or later, Pakistan would be merged into the Indian Union. Acharya Kripalani thought in the same way. Calling on the party to make India a strong, happy, democratic and socialist state, he declared "such an India can win back the seceding children to its lap....for the freedom we have achieved cannot be complete without the unity of India."<sup>19</sup> The Congress Working Committee had also passed a resolution to the same effect. The resolution ran in this way : 'The Committee believe that the destiny of India will yet be realised and that when passions have cooled, a new and stronger unity based on good-will and co-operation will emerge.' But these were idle ideas and this could never happen.

The Congress leaders believed that if they would reject the Mountbatten Plan the British Government might impose another plan, which might bring more calamity for the country.

Most of the prominent Congress leaders had spent their lives in jail-going and imprisonment. Those leaders at last got an opportunity to the contrary, when the Interim Government, was established.

Those leaders, specially Nehru found an opportunity to translate their ideas into action. So if they would have rejected the Mountbatten Plan, they would have to be out of office. Therefore, these leaders did not like to part with power for the sake of the country. The Mountbatten Plan at last provided an opportunity to these leaders.

These leaders did not like to follow Mahatma Gandhi's advice of civil dis-obedience in 1947. So they had no any other alternative except to accept the Mountbatten Plan. As Prof. Brecher has remarked that it was ironic that in this situation, Gandhi, the great compromiser, acted as the pure revolutionary, while Nehru, the acknowledged revolutionary in the Congress, accepted a compromise solution in 1947.

Had these leaders followed Mahatma Gandhi, perhaps the vivisection of the country would have been avoided. Mahatma Gandhi's counsel would have maintained the unity of the country. Nehru, Patel, Prasad and other Congress leaders wanted a composite India. These leaders had been advocating their view-points for about past thirty years. If they could wait for thirty years, why they could not wait for a couple of years more ? Jinnah was dead within a year of Pakistan's foundation. Perhaps after the death of Jinnah, the issue of Pakistan would not have been raised. Perhaps Mosley's opinion seems to be right : 'A little patience and all the troubles might have been avoided.'<sup>20</sup>

Though Gandhi protested against the partition throughout his life, but it is wonder that Gandhi supported the Mountbatten Plan in the All India Congress Committee session on June 14-15, 1947. Nehru has expressed his feelings on this issue in this way : 'But if Gandhi had told us not to, we would have gone on fighting and waiting.'<sup>21</sup>

Hence these above mentioned factors led to the establishment of Pakistan. Jinnah, whose grand-father was a Hindu and who himself was a second generation Muslim, has been called as the architect of Pakistan. But to call Jinnah as the builder of Pakistan is far from truth. Pakistan was the creation of British policy of 'Divide and Rule'. 'I do not feel that either Attlee or

Mountbatten was individually responsible for the partition of India. A long line of their predecessors laid the lines of a policy that could have no other consequences; the special British contribution had consisted in exploiting the discordances in Indian social life.'<sup>22</sup>

### Notes

1. The Indian Annual Register, 1947, I, p. 104.
2. The Constituent Assembly was called in the afternoon of August 14th, and continued its sitting till midnight, which was according Western practice, 15th August.
3. Faruqi, Z.U.H., The Deoband School, p. 82.
4. Brecher, Michael, Nehru, p. 336.
5. The Indian Annual Register, 1947, I, p. 108.
6. Ibid., 1947., I, p. 112.
7. The Indian Annual Register, 1947 I, p. 112 (c).
8. Ibid, p. 112 (c).
9. The Indian Annual Register 1947, I p. 112 (g).
10. Ibid. p. 112 (g).
11. The Indian Annual Register, 1947, I, p. 112 'G).
12. The Indian Annual Register, 1947, p. 112 (r).
13. Michael, Brecher, Nehru, p. 377.
14. Brecher, Michael, Nehru, p. 374.
15. Mosley, Leonard, British Raj, p. 274.
16. Brecher, Michael, Nehru, p. 375.
17. Ibid., p. 375.
18. Ibid., p. 376.
19. Brecher, Michael, Nehru, p. 378.
20. Mosley, Leonard, British Raj, p. 247.
21. Ibid., p. 248
22. Phillips, William, Ventures in Diplomacy, p. 355.

## FOURTEEN

### CAUSES OF INDIAN INDEPENDENCE

India became independent nation on August 15, 1947. She remained under the British authority for 182 years. What are those factors that brought independence ?

#### (1) Growth of Indian Nationality

Nationalism is based on a unity of culture—a common tradition of shared history. It could be safely accepted that an Indian nationalism was the product of European scholars. This question could be posed whether there would have been an Indian nationalism without the British rule and European scholars? The answer is simple. There would undoubtedly have developed national movements in India, but not on the basis of only two nations dominantly Hindu and Muslim but of many regional states, the Marathas, the Andhras, the Bengalis and others. Britain thus helped to create and develop two nationalisms in India.

It could also be noted that the original foundation of the Indian National Congress had the support of a section of British

officials. But when the British Government realized that the Congress would one day challenge British authority, they turned towards the Muslims. The Muslims were prepared to be the loyal supporters to the British rule. Thus the British Government encouraged dual nationalism.

The Indian National Congress encouraged the spirit of Nationalism in the country. Slowly all sections of the Indian population took the membership of the Congress. The Congress started three mass movements in 1920, 1930 and 1942. The Congress passed the resolution of complete independence in its Lahore session of 1929 under the Presidentship of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. It became difficult for the British Government to deny freedom to the country with the commencement of mighty wave of nationalism. Hence India achieved freedom on August 15, 1947.

## **(2) Weak Economic Condition of Britain**

Britain fought two world wars in course of 32 years. So She became a weak power militarily and economically. The British Government had suppressed all national movement of 1920, 1930 and 1942 with the help of the military. But as the result of the second world war Britain became a weak power. Now it was not possible to send armies from England and to suppress national movements in India. The British Government wrote a letter to Lord Wavell in this way "England will not be able hereafter to spare one single man or one single farthing for the Governance of India."<sup>1</sup> Hence Attlee announced a new plan on February 20, 1947 indicating that power would be transferred to Indians by June 1948. The strongest argument in support of the February 20, 1947 decision was Britain's weaker position as a great power in the international set up resulting from the burning of her resources in the course of two world wars.<sup>2</sup> To carry out this new policy Mountbatten was sent as the Governor-General and Viceroy. It was due to Mountbatten Plan that power was transferred.

### (3) Loyalty of Indian Armies Shakened

The trial of the Indian National Army personnel shook the morale of the Indian contingents of the British army giving notice to the British authorities that the loyalty of the Indian contingents could no longer be relied upon in the exercise of their irresponsible power over India.

During the winter of 1945-46 disaffection penetrated the military services, further undermining British prestige. The R. I. F. first mutinied at Dum Dum airport near Calcutta and other stations in India. These were followed by hunger strikes in the Royal Indian Air Force and minor cases of indiscipline in the Royal Indian Navy.

Then there occurred a mutiny of naval ratings at Bombay February 18, 1946. For the next five days the leading base of the Royal Indian Navy and the city itself gave the appearance of a minor battle-field, though there was little bloodshed.

These strikes and mutiny threw a challenge to the British Government. There was a loss of prestige to the Government. This belief also spread over the armed forces that mutiny was not a serious offence.<sup>3</sup>

### (4) Formation of the Labour Government in England

The second world war came to an end in 1945. The Labour Party had forced an election and part of Churchill's undoing may have been that he was so much admired. To the astonishment of the whole world, Churchill had been repudiated by his countrymen. The Labour Party formed the Government. While the second world war had been going on C. Bridges, on behalf of the National Union of Railwaymen made an appeal to the British Government to give freedom to India.

A month after taking office, the Labour Government announced that a general election would take place in India. The Congress refused<sup>4</sup> to be impressed. While the Congress strongly condemned the general election, it decided to fight the election 'in order to demonstrate the will of the people'. Prof. Laski, speaking on Nehru birthday celebration meeting in November

1945 in London made a memorable speech, which must be considered a landmark in the history of India's struggle for freedom. Prof. Laski said: 'When are we going to realise our sense of responsibility towards the Indian people?...Indian freedom is inevitable and inescapable, and what we have to decide is whether that freedom shall come gracefully by British co-operation or instead, by British hostility. We have to decide whether we are capable as a Labour Party and a labour movement of moving forward swiftly to the proud day when we can claim that we have assisted in the emancipation of a great civilisation.'<sup>4</sup>

As a result of the General Elections, the Congress emerged with 91 per cent of the general seats in the Central Assembly. Events were now pushing the Attlee Government forward. On February 19th, 1946, Mr. Attlee announced the appointment of a Cabinet Mission to promote in conjunction with the leaders of Indian opinion the early realization of full self-Government in India.

With the appointment of the Cabinet Mission the Indian independence movement moved forward, for it was now made clear that India would get independence. In May 1946 the Cabinet Mission published its plan. However, five weeks after the Interim Government took office, on February 20, 1947, Mr. Attlee announced in the House of Commons that the Government had decided to transfer power by June 1948 whether or not an Indian Constitution was ready by then. Simultaneously Earl Mountbatten was named Viceroy. He arrived in Delhi in March 1947 and with his labour India achieved her independence on August 15, 1947. So the Labour Government made India free.

#### (5) Churchill and Indian Independence

Sir Winston Churchill, the second world war-time Prime Minister of Britain and the venerated old parliamentarian did not like Indian freedom. Few of British great man have been more British, but also few have been more international. He was regarded the father of House of Commons. With all

these qualities in himself, he was the greatest obstacle in the path of the Indian independence.

The Atlantic Charter promulgated by U.S. President F. D. Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill was made public on August 14, 1941. But Churchill did not apply Article III of the Atlantic Charter to India, which granted all countries the right to choose their own form of Government. Further Churchill stated in London on November 10, 1942. 'I have not become the king's First Minister in order to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire.' Churchill did a great disservice to the Indo-British relation by his speech. He did not like the late Prime Minister of India Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru. When the Interim Government was established on September 2 1946 with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru as its Vice-Chairman, he issued a statement which caused annoyance to the Indian leaders. He said: 'It was a cardinal mistake to entrust the Interim Government to a leader of Caste Hindus, Mr. Nehru. He had good reasons to be the most bitter enemy of any connection between India and the British Commonwealth'. He did not like Attlee's announcement of February 20, 1947 and he expressed his views in this way 'I watch the clattering down of the British Empire with all its glories and all the services it had rendered to mankind'. Churchill spoke about Indian leaders in a strange language: 'In handing over the Government of India to the so-called political classes we are handing over to men of straw, of whom in a few years no traces will remain.'

Mr. Alexander, Minister of Defence replied on behalf of the Government: 'I do not know whether Mr. Churchill intended to attack on Mr. Nehru but his language was pretty forcible. I must say that while we had cause in the past to regret that Mr. Nehru, in pursuit of his own conscience and in the leadership of his home rule party in India was often willing to go to prison nevertheless he is the most able, cultured and experienced person now at the head of the Interim Government and I believe that he and his colleagues, if given a fair and reasonable opportunity to co-operate with the other great communities in India, will be capable and willing to lead in bringing India through

her present difficulties to one of power, influence, prosperity and peace.'<sup>8</sup>

Prime Minister Attlee also intervened in the debate and said: 'We believe, we have done great work for India. We believe the time has come when Indians must shoulder their responsibilities.'

Thus after the reply of the Government, the motion was carried without a division and Churchill left the house amidst peals of laughter.

So if the Churchill Government would have continued in office, India would not probably have become an independent nation in 1947. The Labour Government hastened the process and India achieved her freedom on August 15, 1947.

#### (6) Denial of Freedom not Beneficial

Britain had become a weak power as the result of the second world war. Her resources had been burnt in the course of two world wars. Winston Churchill had declared on more than one occasion that twenty to thirty thousand British forces would have been enough to retain British Raj over India, to re-establish Britain's effective authority over India.<sup>9</sup> Even if Churchill's statements could be regarded as correct, Britain was not in a position to recruit nearly thirty thousand soldiers for suppressing Indian National Movement. At last came Attlee's announcement on February 20, 1947. It was announced that power would be transferred to Indians by June 1948. What were reasons for this declaration? The *New York Herald-Tribune* brought the reasons out behind Attlee's decision: "The British decision to leave India may bring the British more profit than they would win if they could scrap up power to remain for a time.

"Their tenure there, it must be granted, would be short under almost any condition that can now be foreseen. By retiring with grace and with expressions of good-will they may preserve the bulk of their economic interests for a long period, provided Indians can create a Government stable enough to maintain peace and order."<sup>10</sup>

### (7) U.S. Interest in Indian Independence

On August 1, 1942 a week before the adoption of the Quit India Resolution, President Roosevelt had written to Gandhi to assure him that the U.S.A. was constantly striving for and supporting policies of fair dealings and fair play. The letter concluded: 'I shall hope that our common interest in democracy and righteousness will enable your countrymen and mine to make common cause against a common enemy.'<sup>11</sup>

Cordell Hull understood of India's sincere desire for freedom and he made renewed efforts to have British negotiations with India resumed. Subsequently Attlee announced on February 20, 1947 that power would be transferred to Indians by June 1948. There was a sharp reaction in the U.S.A. and U.S. Secretary of State General George C. Marshall said on February 25, 1947 that the United States profoundly hoped that the Indian political leaders would set aside their differences so that India could become completely independent by June 1948.

Thus U.S.A. was interested in Indian independence and Roosevelt hoped that Britain would give independence to India. The Mountbatten Plan give a spirit of satisfaction to the U.S. leaders.

### (8) Acceptance of Pakistan by the Indian Leaders

The League demand of Pakistan was an impediment to Indian independence. Jinnah liked partition of the country. The Congress did not like Jinnah's idea. But at last under the pressure of circumstances, the Congress agreed to divide the country. But Pakistan which the Congress became ready to give was totally different what Jinnah liked. Jinnah did not like the division of the Punjab and Bengal. He called this "Mutilated, moth-eaten and truncated" Pakistan. However, Jinnah reconciled himself to this category of Pakistan. Now impediments were removed and India achieved independence.

### On Explaining the Responsibility for the Partition of India

In the contemporary period the partition of India is such a controversial subject that both the British historians and the

historians of the subcontinent find themselves in difficulties in taking a detached view of the problem. The question that comes to the uppermost mind of a researcher is that, was the partition just a product of British imperialism or was it a natural culmination of historical process ?. It also needs to be studied whether the partition was a product of policy or of accident or both ? Again, was the partition a solution or in other words, was it inevitable ?

The British historians have often emphasised the incompatibility of Hindus and Muslims. Thus presenting an apologetic view of events which led to the partition. Indian historians blame British imperialism as its connivance with the Muslim League. In India a view that the creation of Pakistan was a defeat, nay a dismemberment of Mother India. An analysis of Hindu-Muslim relations can form crux of a study of the partition of India. The writers in Pakistan seem to agree that the creation of Pakistan was the logical conclusion of the Hindu-Muslim relations through the centuries. Some of them in this category are M. Hasan, Choudhary Muhammad Ali, and K.K. Aziz. These post-partition writings, based as they are on the theory of two cultures or nations is nothing but repetition of the slogans of the pre-independent Muslim League. If this is to be accepted then the fears of persons, for instance, like A. Tayyab that East and West wings of Pakistan (now Bangladesh) have distinct cultures of their own, are true. Some of the writers in that part of the sub-continent like G.W. Choudhary, Aziz Ahmad, I.J. Qurashi, and K.K. Siddique also try hard to deny any complicity of the British in the creation of Pakistan. All these writings tend to be more political than historical and the historiography of Pakistan also lacks criticism.

In India on the other hand, one view is that while independence of India was inevitable, partition was not. Another view often expressed in this part of the subcontinent is that is unity of India was exaggerated as an appeal so was the disunity as a tactic.

Finding scapegoats is an old practice quite known in the realm of historiography. Partition of India is attributed to

the Roman Imperialism of the British. Ram Gopal in his book "How India struggled for Freedom" emphasizes the dividing role of the British. Pattabhi Sitaramayya lays emphasis on the character of British policy of supporting one element of society against another. Dr. S.B. Choudhary is of opinion that the British by counterpoising the Hindus against Muslims, the princes against the Bourgeoise, and the moderate constitutionalists against the activists, wanted an early demise of the Congress. Dr. Tara Chand finds the British primarily responsible for the communal rift which was accentuated by constitutional reforms from 1909 to 1935, by which time the "Communal consciousness developed into the consciousness of nationality and concept of political unity into that of federal unity. Muslim nationality blossomed under Britain's warm sympathy into the idea of the Muslim nation, whose expression demanded fulfilled independence and sovereignty.

One may feel that singling out the British for dividing India does not speak high of the political acumen of Indian leadership. Dr. R.C. Majumdar is inclined to say that British did not create the communal problem; they only exploited it.

However, to some, the birth of Pakistan came as a surprise because its demand was actually a bargaining counter. It is also true that the leaders of the Indian freedom movement did not try seriously to eliminate the prevalent contradictions of the Indian society. The national movement with democratic slogans never attempted consistently to take into account the different and often conflicting element of society.

Thus what I have attempted is an explanation of the responsibility of the partition of the country. There were three parties to this tangle and which parties or leaders were responsible? The British Government, the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League were the parties to this problem. I have already explained in a previous chapter that the policy of 'Divide and Rule' is to be traced from the Simla Deputation of 1906. Lord Minto worked to bring about Anglo-Muhammadan rapprochement. The deputation of the Muslims which waited upon Lord Minto on October 1, 1906, the granting of

its request that the Muslim community be treated as a separate and historically important element in India's population and acceptance of the principle of separate representation mark the beginning of Muslim separatism in Indian politics. The introduction of the principle of separate electorates accentuated the differences between the two communities. The Hindus and Muslims stood in two different camps; hopes of unity between the two for political purposes receded in the background. Minto, thus, succeeded in dividing and weakening the forces of nationalism and winning over a large majority of the Muslims to the side of the Government assuring them that their interests were safe with the British. In a letter to the King, Minto proudly wrote that "His Majesty's Mohammadan subjects have been the most loyal supporters of the Raj throughout the recent seditious agitation."

The British Government followed this policy till 1947. The Conservative opposition and Muslim intransigence whipped up by the British prevented the Round Table Conference from arriving at any compromise and the dominion status was doomed to failure. During the war period when the Congress ministries had resigned the office in 1939, the British tried to woo Jinnah more and more. The Cripps proposals indirectly accepted the Muslim demand for Pakistan. The British thus implanted the seeds of Muslim separatism. They nurtured the growth of the plant and finally brought it to fruition. The strength of the Muslim League had increased from 1942 because the Congress leaders had been interned. The British had seemingly accepted the growing strength of the Muslim League as a significant factor in the Indian political scene.

The failure of the Gandhi-Jinnah talks in Sept. 1944 seemed to rule out for the time being the possibility of an agreement between the Congress and the League on the main constitutional issue. The chief hurdle, Lord Wavell realised, was Mr. Jinnah's intransigence on the Pakistan issue. Lord Wavell found Jinnah intractable at the Simla conference. At Simla, Jinnah seemed to be unusually tense and unsure. In July 1945, Jinnah almost single-handed blocked Lord Wavell's plan—a plan for which the Viceroy had laboured for eight

months. If the Viceroy had mustered the courage to override Jinnah's objection and gone ahead with the reconstitution of his executive council, it was not impossible that the League leader might have fallen in line. But Wavell did not like to go, so far for fear of Churchill. He thought that Churchill would not support him in case he would displease Jinnah.

The policy of 'Divide and Rule' reached a climax in the time of Lord Mountbatten. He was the last Viceroy and Governor-General of dependent India. He found that Jinnah was not amenable to compromise. The Mountbatten Plan was adopted by the British Parliament. Pakistan was born on August 14, 1947. The independence was thus tugged with the partition of India. In the 24th Mountagu-Burton Lecture on International Affairs, Prof. C.H. Philips examined the circumstances which led to the partition of India. He was inclined to hold that the failure to accept the 1935 Act earnestly and work it sincerely was the basic cause that led to the partition. But he seems to overlook the traditional British policy of 'Divide and Rule' which was the contribution of the British Raj in India. The seed of separatism had been sown early in the country by the British policy. Jawaharlal Nehru also held the British policy responsible for the partition of the country. He told Prof. Michael Brecher in 1956 : 'I think now looking back, that partition could have been avoided if the British Government's policy had been different about a year or eighteen months before. Gandhi looked upon partition as the result of Britain's long drawn-out policy of 'Divide and Rule'.

### **Mohammed Ali Jinnah and the Muslim League**

The second party to the complicated political problem was Jinnah. It is said that he was the main architect of Pakistan. He himself remarked that it was he with the help of his secretary and his typewriter who won Pakistan for the Muslims. There is no doubt that he played the major and the positive part in Indian political life from 1937-to 1947. But apart from his political skill and tact, the British policy of 'Divide and

Rule' had helped Jinnah a lot in attaining his political objectives.

A little introduction of Jinnah would not be out of place here. In the pre-1920 period he was a strong nationalist and a member of the Indian National Congress. He was regarded an Ambassador of 'Hindu-Muslim' unity. He was proud and loved vanity. Vanity, jealousy and dislike undoubtedly play a major role in politics. The emergence of Gandhi in the Indian politics disillusioned him. The Non-co-operation movement of 1920 created a rift between Jinnah and the Indian National Congress. The rift went on widening and it was never really closed until 1947. Jinnah finally made good bye to India in 1947. He was a secular-minded constitutionalist. He did not like the mass participation in politics. He once suggested to Nehru that only matriculates should be the member of the Indian National Congress. He resigned from the Congress in 1920 as a protest against Gandhi's non co-operation Movement of 1920. He was a member of the Muslim League from 1913. It was a tragedy that a strong nationalist like Jinnah took shelter under a communal organisation like the Muslim League.

The year 1928 is another important date in Jinnah's life. His fourteen points were rejected at the All-parties National convention in Dec. 1928. He was dejected at this event and he called it as "the parting of the ways." Thus politically he was rejected. It was a bitter pill for Jinnah to swallow when his leadership of the Muslims was questioned and this hit him to quick. His second wife Ruttie Petit, died in the prime of her youth. It was an instance of failure in his personal life. After the Second Round Table Conference he settled in London in 1931. He returned to India in 1934. He was elected president of the League in March 1934.

The failure of the Muslim League in the election of 1936 caused mental agony to Jinnah. But after the resignation of the Congress Ministry in 1939, he got an opportunity to build up the Muslim League. His political stature increased because the Congress was in political wilderness. The Lahore resolution for Pakistan was adopted in March 1940 and since then he worked to attain his political objective. The imprisonment of the Congress leaders as the result of the Quit India Movement

of 1942 gave another opportunity to Jinnah to build up his political image. He now plainly advocated the 'two-nation theory.' It was an irony of the situation that he who was a strong nationalist in his early political life now demanded the partition of the country on the basis of the 'two-nation theory'. The British Raj was responsible for the growth of this theory and Jinnah caught hold of this theory in order to carve out a homeland for the Indian Muslims.

V.V. Nagarkar in his newly published book (1976) *Genesis of Pakistan* has advanced his thesis that the imperialist rulers tried to counter the forces of nationalism by exploiting not only the class differences between the feudal and middle classes but also the diversities of caste and creed. Among the principle allies of the Raj, says Nagarkar, were the Ashraf, the Muslim aristocrats, who traced their origin to the conquering Arabs, Persians and Turks. Despite their bitterness over the loss of their privileged position following the collapse of the Mughal empire, the Ashraf turned into the biggest supporters of colonial rule and acted as a 'counter-weight' to the votaries of composite nationalism.

The loyal Ashraf, even before the end of the 19th century, had developed the two-nation theory. The direct rule by British Parliament was instrumental in creating a new class of educated Muslims who, in the 1930s threw overboard the Ashraf leadership and eventually carried the two-nation theory to its logical conclusion. Nagarkar has pointed out that the Ashraf and the other Muslim leaders who found communal politics to be a convenient short-cut to British patronage were the guilty parties. The British policy of divide and rule could not but lead to the denouncement of "divide and quit". After the assumption of Muslim League leadership by Jinnah, the drift towards partition became inexorable, the seeds of the savage surgery having been sown with the introduction of the separate electorates.

The year between 1942 to 1945 gave a golden opportunity to Jinnah. The Muslim League became a strong organisation. The Rajaji formula of 1944 and the Jinnah-Gandhi correspondence

in September 1944 could not bring any improvement in the political situation of the country. The imperialist policy of the British war Prime Minister Churchill and Wavell's handling of the situation (1945-47) strengthened Jinnah's position. Wavell had acted "as a total partisan of the Muslim League" at the Simla conference of June 1945 in preparation for the formation of an interim national Government, says Dr. S. Gopal, professor of contemporary history at Jawaharlal Nehru University in the biography of Jawaharlal Nehru. At a time when the immediate fortunes of the League could not control the Ministeries in any of the provinces where Muslims were in a majority, Wavell assisted the League by conceding parity between Hindus and Muslims in the interim Government and refusing to select a Muslim belonging to the Congress.

When the interim Government had to be formed with Congress representatives alone on September 2, 1946, the Viceroy did everything to curb the functioning, while the Governors favoured the League against the Congress in the provinces in many ways.

Wavell at the same time made frantic efforts to bring the League into the interim Government. He finally brought in the League without securing any precise commitment to the Cabinet Mission Plan, renunciation of its direct action policy and pledge of co-operation in Government. He also accepted Jinnah's nomination of five members including one belonging to the Scheduled castes.

"So eager was Wavell to destroy the control by the Congress of immediate authority that he brought the League in, despite Jawaharlal's repeated protests, unconditionally" says Dr. S. Gopal. "It was among the most serious of Wavell's many disservices to India."

Once in the Government, the League brought the Administration in a standstill. And Wavell began to press the Congress to accept an unfavourable interpretation of the Cabinet Mission Plan to get the League into the Constituent Assembly.

On February 5, 1947, non-League Ministers wrote to Wavell that the League could not continue in the Government and a

week after Nehru said he and his colleagues would otherwise leave the Government.

The British Prime Minister, Mr. Attlee, responded by announcing that Britain would withdraw from India by June 1948, handing over power to the central Government and to existing provincial Governments in some areas if there were no Government established by a fully representative Assembly.

Mountbatten took over from Wavell in March 1947 to effect the partition demanded by the League and accepted by both the British Government and the Congress. He played a crucial role in the transfer of power. Mountbatten and Jinnah held six critical meetings during the first fortnight of April 1947. He told authors Mr. Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre, who have mentioned in their book "Freedom at Midnight" that he tried every trick he could play, used every appeal he could imagine", to share Jinnah's resolve to have partition. But there was no argument that could move Jinnah from his consuming determination to realize the dream of Pakistan."

Mountbatten later recalled : "I never could have believed that an intelligent man, well-educated trained in the inns of court was capable of simply closing his mind as Jinnah did. It was not that he did not see the point. He did, but a kind of shutter came down. He was the evil genius in the whole thing. The others could be persuaded, but not Jinnah. While he was alive nothing could be done."

"Partition" Mountbatten wrote "is sheer madness" and "no one would ever induce me to agree to it were it not for this fanatic communal madness that had seized everybody and leaves no other course open." His task was really difficult. By 1946 the creation of what Jinnah had earlier disdainfully called "truncated and moth-eaten Pakistan" had become inevitable. Thus Pakistan was born on August 14, 1947.

In this way the policy of Divide and Rule and the personality of Jinnah brought vivisection of the country. If only Lord Mountbatten had known in 1947, that Mohammed Ali Jinnah was stricken with lung disease and would not have more than

one or two years to live, the awesome decision to cut up India into two might well have been avoided, according to two foreign political researchers.

In their book 'Freedom at Midnight' just published, Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre record that knowledge of Jinnah's illness at that crucial period when the new and last Viceroy was having individual talks with the Indian leaders, namely Jawaharlal Nehru, Mahatma Gandhi, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and M.A. Jinnah (in that order) in the privacy of his official residence might have enabled him to steer his strategy of "operation seduction" in such a way as to accomplish his fond hope of giving shape to a free united India that could stay within the commonwealth.

"That secret was frozen on to the grey surface of a piece of film, a film which could have upset the political equation and would almost certainly have changed the course of Asian history," the authors say "yet so precious was the secret that even the British C.I.D., one of the most effective investigative agencies in the world, was ignorant of its existence" they add.

It was known only to Dr. J.A.L. Patel, Bombay's distinguished and discrete physician, who kept in a sealed envelope in 1946 the X-ray films that revealed that Jinnah, the 70 year-old Muslim League leader who had frustrated Mountbatten's efforts to preserve India's unity was living under a sentence of death from tuberculosis. The authors claim that no one, neither Lord Wavell nor his successor, had any inkling of the nature of Jinnah's illness. Jinnah's daughter, Mrs. Wadia, learnt of it only after his death and that Liaquat Ali Khan could possibly have been aware of it in the last six months of the Qaid-e-Azam's life. Jinnah's sister, Fatima only knew but no other.

According to the authors Jinnah knew that if his Hindu enemies learned that he was dying, their whole political outlook could change. They might try to wait him into his grave to unravel his dream with the more malleable men underneath him in the hierarchy of the Muslim League. It is a difficult question mark.

It is a fact that had the Congress leaders learnt of Jinnah's lung cancer, they would have played with time and the Working Committee of the Congress would not have adopted Mountbatten's plan. But it would be a far-fetched interpretation to offer that the revelation of the film of Dr. J.A.L. Patel could have averted India's partition. Mr. Nagarkar has advanced to prove that partition was not the result of minor accident but of broad and big forces of history. These he suggests have been countered, given mass mobilization against communal politics. But the battle for United India was "lost" when the last mass struggle for Indian freedom and unity collapsed in late 1942.

### The Indian National Congress and Jawaharlal Nehru

The third party of this problem was the Indian National Congress. The Congress stood for democracy, secularism and a common Indian nationality. The Muslim League existed primarily to safeguard and promote the interests of the Indian Muslims as a separate political entity. During the course of the Indian freedom movement the Congress was not prepared to give up its national character and the Muslim League refused to give up its communal character. The acceptance of the separate electorates for the Muslims of the country by the Congress in 1916 at the Lucknow session was an unwise act on the part of the Congress leaders. If Jinnah's famous Fourteen points of March 1929 would have been incorporated either complete or partial by the Congress, the communal politics in India would have received a jerk. But this event antagonised Jinnah and he identified himself fully with the Muslim League. The election of 1936 was a bolt from the blue for Jinnah. The Muslim League won only 109 out of the 482 seats, securing only 4.8 per cent of the total Muslim votes. It did not win a majority of seats in any of the four Muslim-majority provinces. In July 1937 Congress ministries were formed in six provinces and in March 1938 the Congress formed ministries in two more provinces.

Too much has been said by Maulana Azad and other writers of the alleged refusal of the Congress to form coalition

ministries with the Muslim League in 1937, in the United Provinces. Azad had written in his book, 'India Wins Freedom' (1959) pp. 160-61, in this way; "This was a most unfortunate development. If the U.P. League's offer of co-operation had been accepted, the Muslim League's party would for all practical purposes have merged in the Congress. Jawaharlal's action gave the Muslim League in the U.P. a new base of life. All students of Indian politics know that it was from the U.P. that the League was reorganised. Mr. Jinnah took full advantage of the situation and started an offensive which ultimately led to Pakistan." C.H. Philips has observed in the introduction to the book "The Partition of India (1970)" and has contended Azad's conclusion in this way : "In the light of this success at the polls, there was justification in the refusal of its leaders to accept any policy of forming coalition ministries with other parties, and certainly not with the Muslim League which, in failing almost entirely to bring out even the Muslim vote, had been humiliated in the general election. On the contrary by offering places to many Congress Muslims in its new ministries was able to point the morale, and in this context Nehru's declaration that Congress must actively pursue a policy of mass Muslim contact made excellent sense."

Jawaharlal Nehru may have been opposed in 1937 to any opportunistic alliances by the Congress with the Muslim League in the then United Provinces but no personal responsibility could be fixed on him for the failure of negotiations for League cooperation with the Congress Government in return for two seats in the State Cabinet.

This is the view taken by Dr. Sarvepalli Gopal, Professor of contemporary history at Jawaharlal Nehru University, in the biography of the first Prime Minister. He contests the stand taken by Maulana Azad in his memoirs that Nehru's action gave the League in U.P. a new base of life and enabled Jinnah to start "an offensive which ultimately led to Pakistan."

At a press conference after the posthumous publication of Azad memoirs, Nehru said Azad thought sometimes in individual terms rather than in terms of the historical forces at work.

"His loyalty to the memory of an Old Colleague was too strong to permit him to rebut the charge in detail" and "the result has been the entrenchment of myth" the biographer says.

As a matter of fact, the negotiations broke down because both Azad and Nehru insisted on full acceptance of the Congress conditions that all Muslim League legislators should become full members of the Congress and no Muslim League candidates should be set up in by-elections. "Neither at the time, nor even later during his life did Azad voice any regrets, either to Jawaharlal or in public" the biographer notes.

The account in the biography seeks to make it clear that while not happy about the opportunist unprincipled bargaining with the League, Nehru had allowed Azad, Govind Ballav Pant and Rafi Ahmad Kidwai to do what they thought best. The discussions had not broken down on the question of one or two representatives of the League in the Ministry, nor had Nehru decided unilaterally that it should be one and not two.

"Any agreement" he says, "would in effect have accepted that politics were a matter of alliances between upper-class groups, betrayed all Muslims who thought in non-communal terms and abandoned the economic programme on which Jawaharlal had been laying so much stress. No such agreement could have endured, for the League had no long-term economic or social objectives."

The account shows at the same time that in the early months of 1937, preceding U.P. elections and consequent Congress-League negotiations, Nehru and Jinnah attacked each other in the press. Nehru said British imperialism and nationalism represented by the Congress were the only two forces which mattered in India. Jinnah replied that there was a third party—the Muslims.

With the object of forcing the Congress, which had formed Ministries in eight provinces into coalitions with the League, Jinnah encouraged the Congress subsequently when World War II broke out and the Congress sought a joint approach

with the League to the British Government for a declaration that India would be granted independence after the war.

At a press conference before his death Nehru said "the Maulana's thinking that I was deciding and ordering things was not quite correct. These things are seldom done by an odd individual. I was not in the ministry nor going to be in the ministry. There were others too, senior people. May be my views counted to some extent. I will tell you quite frankly what I was worried about at that time. I was anxious that since Congress ministries came in, they should take up the question of land reforms, viz. Zamindari abolition and I did not want that question stymied by any agreement with the Muslim League which was largely representative of the big Zamindars of the U.P. Therefore, it was not so much a question of principles but politics to be adopted by the Congress Ministry."

Maulana Azad has blamed Jawaharlal Nehru for the partition of the country. His statement runs as follows : 'As soon as Sardar Patel had been convinced, Lord Mountbatten turned his attention to Jawaharlal Nehru. Nehru was not at first willing and reacted violently against the very idea of partition, but Lord Mountbatten persisted till step by step Jawaharlal's opposition was worn down. Within a month of Lord Mountbatten's arrival in India Jawaharlal, the firm opponent of partition had become, if not a supporter, at least acquiescent towards the idea....The arguments of Sardar Patel must have some effect, but could not have been decisive. Jawaharlal was also greatly impressed by Lady Mountbatten. She was not only extremely intelligent, but had a most attractive and friendly temperament. She admired her husband greatly and in many cases tried to interpret his thought to those who would not first agree with him'.<sup>12</sup> Azad had also tried to create an atmosphere of such kind, which might be interpreted that Lady Mountbatten exerted certain influence on Nehru.

On being asked at a press conference before his death about Azad's observation that Lord and Lady Mountbatten had influenced him (Mr. Nehru) to accept partition, Nehru said : 'I say it is quite conceivable for people to have different

recollection as to who influenced whom. The real fact is that I think, personal influences count. How am I to say how I am influenced. I cannot judge it. But I think the real factors was the situation itself and the bitterness and the conflicts that were growing and the feeling that even if some arrangement could be arrived as to prevent partition, those conflicts and inner disruptions would continue and might come in the way of any marked progress on the economic or other plane later....So, how can I judge, how far I was responsible ? Apart from this responsibility, Maulana Saheb thinks too much in individual terms and not in terms of historic forces at work. Individuals make a difference and have made a differences but sometimes individuals, are only symbols of forces at work." To Azad's assertion that it was the Mountbattens who had induced Mr. Nehru to agree to partition Rajgopalachari said to Monica Felton in 1962 "that it was in very bad taste to publicize that statement. And the statement itself is untrue. Partition had already been agreed before Mountbatten arrived and the decision was not influenced by personal consideration. These things come about as the result of the working of historic forces. Neither the Prime Minister nor Patel could have been influenced in a way that Azad said they were."

Acharya J.B. Kripalani has disputed the assertion of the late Maulana Azad that he was against India's partition and had made it clear to Mahatma Gandhi. "I do not know what private conference he had with Gandhiji. All I know is that he never opposed it (partition) in the (Congress) Working Committee or the AICC", Mr. Kripalani says in his biography of Gandhiji released by the Publications Division of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

In the book titled 'Gandhi, His life and Thought' Acharya Kripalani, who was the Congress president in 1947, describes the account of the events in the Maulana's book 'India Wins Freedom' as a curious mixture of facts and fancies and says "It is not a question of correcting a passage here and there. It would require a volume as big as he had written to correct all his misstatements and misconceptions." Narrating the proceedings of the Congress Working Committee on June 4, 1947,

at which the Mountbatten's partition plan was accepted, Mr. Kripalani says that the only CWC member who voted against the decision was Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan who felt that such a division of India would let down the Pathans and cause their ruin.

"Maulana Azad and other Muslim leaders were also a party to this decision", he says, "I feel if along with Ghaffar Khan they had also stood up against partition, it might not have taken place. But they were always obsessed with the idea of self-determination for the Muslims."

So Azad's statements are full of lies. Regarding Nehru's Press Conference of July 10, 1946 in which he emphasized the sovereign character of the Constituent Assembly, Azad said in his book regarding this event that Mr. Nehru had made a "costly mistake" The statement of Nehru that Congress would enter the Constituent Assembly "completely unfettered by agreements and free to meet all situations as they arise" was not liked by Azad. Nehru's statement, Maulana says enabled Jinnah who 'had reconciled himself' to the Cabinet Mission plan to demand a fresh review of the situation.

Even Nehru's first biographer Michael Brecher has argued that Nehru should have avoided a public discussion of political probabilities which could not but provoke the League. B.R Nanda in the book 'The Partition of India' says : "He (Nehru) was committing neither a breach of faith with the Cabinet Mission, nor an act of sabotage. Neither in his speech at the All-India Congress Committee nor at the press conference did he intend to wreck the Cabinet Mission plan."

Jinnah's return to his obstructionist path made Maulana Azad say that the statement by Nehru was "one of those unfortunate events which changed the course of history." Patel spoke of great difficulties Nehru created with "childlike innocence."

Dr. Gopal says in Nehru's biography : "Jinnah had not been in the first instance happy about a commitment from which he had not drawn all the advantages he had expected, and used Nehru's statement as the chance to break out of the

acceptance.” He adds that Nehru’s assertion effectively deals with a difficulty created by the Cabinet Mission’s “unwarranted and clandestine assurance to Jinnah” that a majority vote in a section (of the Constituent Assembly) would ensure compulsory grouping of the provinces.

He asserts that Pakistan was not made inevitable by Nehru’s statements. “They at the most provided Jinnah with an opening.” The record as researched by Dr. Gopal demonstrates that dithering and anti-Congress prejudice of Viceroy Wavell during the crucial years (1945-47) had already strengthened Jinnah’s position.

So on the basis of published documents and contemporary research publications Nehru was not alone responsible for the partition of the country. To me it appears that partition was not the result of minor accidents or of tactless remarks by Nehru but of broad and big forces of history. It was a tragedy that in course of time Gandhi also lost faith in the Unity of the country. The authors of ‘Freedom at Midnight’ have held Gandhi as an unremitting opponent of partition. But V. Shankar, Secretary to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel during his entire period of office as Deputy Prime Minister joined issue with the author’s picturisation of Gandhi on March 3, 1976 and said that Gandhi accepted of what was later described as “moth-eaten Pakistan” during his talks with Jinnah in 1944. Gandhi also accepted the Mountbatten Plan on June 14-15 at the meeting of the A.I.C.C. He asked the delegates to support the plan. So all prominent leaders of the Congress including Gandhi shared the responsibility for the partition of the country. Shankar agreed with the views of the book ‘Freedom at Midnight’ co-authored by Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre regarding the partition of the country. “The greatest responsibility for the partition (as a way out of the then prevailing situation) rested with Patel in that he secured Nehru’s approval anticipating Gandhi’s acquiescence. The credit for this ought not to go to Mountbatten. He could make no impression on Jinnah and the Congress leaders had no option but to accept partition.”

The “Divide and Rule” policy of the British Government, certain wrong decision on the part of the Congress leaders and

the personality of Jinnah were responsible for the partition of the country. When Jinnah learnt in 1946 that he was suffering from tuberculosis of the lungs, he became ruthless. He knew this fact that there would be no Pakistan after his death. The Conservative English Government of Churchill helped him a lot in this direction. The Simla Conference of 1945 built up his political stature. Jinnah was a proud and vain man. The British officialdom helped him a lot in securing his political objective. Six months before the Pakistan resolution was adopted by the All-India Muslim League in March 1940, officialdom in India had been supporting Muslim separatism. Thompson wrote in his report to the British Government in 1940 that British officials in Delhi were seriously pushing the so-called 'Pakistan' scheme. In this background the Muslim League adopted a resolution at Lahore on March 23-24 demanding the partition of the country on the basis of two-nation theory.

The "Divide and Rule" policy of the British Government and two-nation theory of the Muslim League were sufficient to undermine the unity of the country. The wrong decisions on the part of the Congress leaders including Gandhi who styled Jinnah in 1944 as Qaid-e-Azam helped him to attain his cherished objective. Partition had become inevitable from the policy of encouraging the communalists that Viceroy Linlithgow pursued after the Congress withdrew from provincial governments on the declaration of World War II and by the over-eagerness of Viceroy Wavell to force a coalition between the Muslim League.

V. Shankar has blamed the British for allowing the situation to deteriorate to a point "Where intransigence became a rewarding virtue, obstinacy becomes an asset, communal frenzy acquired a popular merit and concessions against better judgement were regarded as inevitable." The British exploited the communal differences that existed in the country. The East India Company and the successor British government generated a number of forces which had a dynamic interaction on one another. The British policy of divide and rule could not but lead to the denouncement of "Divide and Quit." It is not possible to agree with Maulana Azad that the country got cut into

two simply because of a tactless statement here or a tactical error there. So partition was not the result of minor accident or of tactless remarks by Nehru but of broad and big forces of history.

To conclude, it was principally the failure on the part of the Ashraf and the Aligarh-educated Muslim bourgeoisie to grasp the fundamentals of a modern welfare state, which made them raise the bogey of Hindu domination in United India. It is a fact that of all people, Jinnah spearheaded the demand for a Muslim homeland. It looks like an irony of history, since he was neither a product of Aligarh nor a scion of the Ashraf. The real ballast to the demand for Pakistan was provided by the Aligarh intelligentsia who instead of taking a leaf out of the Iranian and Indonesian Muslim tradition of cherishing their pre-Islamic national ethos, were swayed by the *raison d' etre* of the theocratic status of West Asia. In this, they were unwittingly aided by the Urdu and Hindi literati who failed to strike a balance between the two sister languages and thereby clouded the cultural life of Muslim and Hindu North Indians by giving it a communal colour. On the political plane Mahatma Gandhi's support to the discredited Turkish Sultan was a disaster, who did not symbolise a secular, resurgent Turkey. This movement put a premium on religious fanaticism. Thus the Muslims established another nation state.

### Notes

1. T.T.S. Krishna Menon, p. 138.
2. The Indian Annual Register, 1957, I, p. 109.
3. Brecher, Michael, Nehru, p. 308.
4. George, T.T.S., Krishna Menon, p. 137.
5. The Indian Annual Register, 1947, I, p. 173.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 176.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 176
8. *Ibid* p. 177
9. *Ibid.*, p. 112 (C). .
10. *Ibid.*, p. 108.
11. Dorothy, Norman, Nehru, II, p. 128.
12. Azad, Maulana, India Wins Freedom, pp. 182-84.























## CHRONOLOGY, 1919-1947

1919	April 13	Jallianwala Bagh Tragedy.
	July 21	Suspension of the anti-Rowlatt Bill Movement by Gandhi.
	Dec. 24	Announcement of a Royal proclamation for the new reforms.
1920	March 10	Gandhi announced his non-cooperation programme.
	June 9	The Khilafat Committee approved the programme of non-cooperation.
	Dec.	The annual Congress session at Nagpur confirmed the programme of non-cooperation.
1921	July 8	The All-India Khilafat Conference called upon the Muslims to resign from the British army.
	Nov. 17	The Prince of Wales visit to Bombay.
1922	Feb. 4	Chauri Chura event.
	Feb. 24	Civil disobedience movement suspended.
	March 10	Arrest and imprisonment of Gandhi.
	Dec.	Gaya Congress and formation of the Swaraj Party.
1923	Sept.	Special session of the Indian National Congress at Delhi.
	Nov.	Election in the country.
1924	Feb. 5	Gandhi was released.
	Dec. 1924	Congress Session at Belgaum.
1925	June	Death of C. R. Das.
1926	Jan. to Dec.	Year of silence for Gandhi.
	Feb.	General Election.

Dec.	Gauhati Session of the Congress.
1927 Nov. 1	Appointment of a Royal Commission.
1928 Feb. 3	Simon Commission at Bombay.
Aug.	Last meeting of the All-parties Conference.
1929 April 8	Throwing of Bombs in the Central Legislative Assembly.
Oct. 31	Announcement for the Round Table Conference.
Dec.	Lahore Conference.
1930 Jan. 26	Celebration of 'Independence Day'.
Jan. 30.	Gandhi's eleven points.
March 12,	March of Dandi.
May 5,	Arrest of Gandhi.
May, 12	First Round Table Conference.
1931 March 5,	Gandhi—Irwin pact.
Sept. 7	Second Round Table Conference.
1932 Aug. 16	Communal Award.
Sept.	Poona Pact
1933 May 8	Third Round Table Conference.
July 31	Gandhi's Fast
Aug. 4	Arrest of Gandhi.
1934 April 7	Debased.
Sept. 18	End of Civil Disobedience Movement.
Oct. 26-28	Announcement of Gandhi for leaving the Congress.
1935 Aug. 2	Congress Session at Bombay.
	Government of India Act received royal assent.
Aug. 6	Linlithgow appointed as new Viceroy from April 1936.
Sept. 5	Nehru released from prison.
1936 9-15 April	All-India Congress Committee met at Lucknow : Nehru took over presidentship.
11-12 April	24th Session of the All-India Muslim League meeting in Bombay attacked federal scheme in new Act but decided to work provincial scheme : Jinnah President.

12-24 April	49th Session Indian National Congress at Lucknow rejected new constitution but decided to take part in elections to provincial legislatures.
April 18	Marques of Hastings installed as Viceroy.
Oct. 3	First Session of Bihar United Muslim Conference held at Patna.
Nov. 2	Fazlul Haque leader of the Praja Socialist Party in Bengal removed from membership of Muslim League Central Parliamentary Board.
Dec. 9-11	Congress Working Committee met in Bombay, Nehru selected President of Congress.
Dec. 27-28	50th Session of Congress at Faizpur.
1937 Jan. Feb.	Elections held for provincial assemblies.
March 1	...The immediate objective of the Congress in the Legislatures is to fight the new constitution.
March 16	Congress Working Committee meeting at Delhi passed resolution authorising conditional acceptance of office in the provinces.
April 1	Provincial responsible government came into office.
April 26	Nehru and Jinnah issued counter-statements on Congress bid to capture Muslim support.
July 5-8	Congress Working Committee met at Wardha and resolved to accept office.
July	Congress Ministries formed in Bihar, Orissa, C.P., U.P., Bombay and Madras.
Aug. 14-17	Congress Working Committee met at Wardha and discussed general policy to be followed by Congress ministries.
Dec. 27-28	First session of All-India Muslim students federation held in Calcutta : Jinnah President.
1938 Jan. 18	Subhas Chandra Bose elected president of the Congress.

**Feb. 15** Bihar and U.P. ministries resigned over question of release of political prisoners.

**Feb. 19-21** 51st Session of Indian National Congress at Haripura in Gujarat.

**Feb. 25** Constitutional crisis in U.P. ended.

**Feb. 26** Bihar cabinet withdrew resignation.

**April 14** Subhas Chandra Bose opposed to Muslims to join Congress.

**April 21** Death of Sir Muhammad Iqbal.

**April 24** Bengal Hindu Mahasabha in Calcutta appeal to Gandhi not to conclude his negotiations with Jinnah.

**April 28** Gandhi-Jinnah statement issued.

**May 12-14** Conference of premiers of seven Congress presidents.

**May 20** Gandhi had talk with Jinnah in Bombay.

**June 4** Council of the Muslim League discussed Congress memorandum on communal peace terms and authorised Jinnah to send reply to Congress president.

**June 15** Full text of Gandhi-Jinnah and Jinnah-Nehru correspondence released.

**June 24** Subhas Bose and other leaders discussed Congress-League negotiations with Gandhi at Wardha.

**June 25** Viceroy left Bombay for England. Lord Brabourne acting Viceroy.

**July 7** Two Muslim organizations opposed to League established in Bihar, viz. Jamiatul-ulima and Momin Jamait.

**Aug. 16** Subhas-Jinnah correspondence released.

**Oct. 24** Viceroy returned to India.

**Dec. 11-16** Congress working Committee met at Wardha and passed resolution declaring Hindu Mahasabha and Muslim League communal organizations (Dec. 15).

**Dec. 26-29** 26th Session of Muslim League held at Patna.

1939 Jan. 30 Subhas Chandra Bose re-elected Congress President. Members of Working Committee resigned.

March 9 At Annual session of Congress at Tripuri, C.P., Subhas Chandra Bose resigned and Rajendra Prasad elected president in his stead.

Sept. 3 Viceroy announced that India was at war with Germany.

Sept. 8-14 Congress Working Committee met at Wardha in emergency session.

Sept. 10 Nehru returned to India from China.

Sept. 14 Desolution of Congress Working Committee on War crisis and India required declaration of war aims from British government.

Oct. 8 Viceroy made statement on War aims and War effort.

Oct. 22-23 Congress Working Committee met at Wardha and issued manifesto calling on Congress ministries to resign.  
by end of Oct. Ministries in all Congress, provinces had resigned. Governors assumed control under Section 93 of Government of India Act.

Nov. 1 Gandhi, Rajendra Prasad and Jinnah had interviews with viceroy to discuss proposal for expanding executive council

Dec. 22 Observed as 'Deliverance Day' by followers of Muslim League throughout India.

1939 During this year partition scheme were put forward by Dr. Syed Abdul Latif, Sir Sikandar Hyat Khan, Professor Syed Zafarul Hasan and Dr. Muhammad Afzal Husan Qadri.

1940 Jan. 7 Jinnah reiterated League demand for recognition as authoritative and representative organization of Muslims in India. Nehru stated that Congress did not recognise League as sole representative of Muslims.

Jan. 17 Viceroy at Baroda stated that federation had been suspended not abandoned.

Feb. 16 Abul Kalam Azad elected President of Congress.

March 13 Sir Michael O'Dwyer shot dead in London.

March 19-20 53rd session of Congress held at Ramgarh. Complete independence and Constituent Assembly demanded.

March 23 'Lahore resolution' of Muslim League.

March 31 Jinnah issued statement from New Delhi appealing to Hindus and Sikhs to give serious consideration to League scheme of partition.

April 15 Master Tara Singh, presiding at first U.P. Sikha conference at Lucknow, said 'If the Moslem League want to establish Pakistan they will have to pass through an ocean of Sikh blood.'

May 6 Nehru characterised Pakistan scheme as foolish and said that it would not last 24 hours.

May 10 Winston Churchill replaced Neville Chamberlain as Prime Minister.

May 19 L. S. Amery succeeded Lord Zetland as Secretary of State.

June 17-21 Congress Working Committee met at Wardha and announced (June 21) that it could not accept Gandhi's extreme stand on non-violence.

July 1 Subhas Chandra Bose arrested.

July 3-7 Emergency meeting of Congress Working Committee in Delhi renewed demand for immediate declaration of full independence for India, with provisional national government constituted at Centre.

Aug. 7 The 'August Offer'.

Aug. 31-  
Sept. 2 Viceroy's offer and passing resolution stating that League's full cooperation in war effort would be conditional on Viceroy clearing certain points with Jinnah.

Sept. 15 A.I.C.C. met in Bombay and rejected August Offer, Gandhi assumed active leadership of Congress.

Sept. 28 Working Committee of League met in New Delhi and rejected August Offer.

Oct. 17 Individual Civil Disobedience movement started by Vinoba Bhave.

Oct. 21 Vinoba arrested.

Oct. 31 Nehru arrested.

Dec. 5 Subhas Chandra Bose released.

1941 Jan. 5 Third stage of Civil Disobedience campaign began.

Jan. 27 Subhas Chandra Bose escaped to Germany.

March 13-14 Non-party Conference in Bombay under the presidency of Tej Bahadur Sapru.

July 22 Both Gandhi and Jinnah reacted unfavourably to Simla announcement on expansion of Viceroy's executive council and national defence council.

Aug. 'Atlantic Charter' : Joint declaration by Roosevelt and Churchill.

By Mid-Oct. Many Congressmen released.

Dec. 3 Civil Disobedience prisoners, including Nehru and Azad set free.

Dec. 6 Pearl Harbour bombing.

Dec. 23 Gandhi retired from leadership of Congress.

1942 March 11 Statement by Prime Minister in the House of Commons announcing decision to send Cripps Mission to India.

March 23 Cripps arrived in Delhi.

April 2 Congress Working Committee rejected Cripps proposal.

April 2 League Working Committee rejected Cripps proposals.

April 3	Colonel Louis Johnson, President Roosevelt's personal envoy, arrived in Delhi.
April 11	Resolution of Congress Working Committee and of League rejected proposals were published.
April 11	Cripps held press conference and later broadcast on breakdown of discussions.
April 12	Cripps left India for England.
April 26	'Quit India' programme discussed.
July 6-14	Congress Working Committee met at Wardha and passed resolution demanding withdrawal of British rule from India and determining on mass civil disobedience campaign under Gandhi's leadership if demand not complied with.
July 15	Rajagopalachari resigned from Congress.
Aug. 7	A.I.C.C. met in Bombay.
Aug. 8	Quit India resolution adopted.
Aug. 9	Gandhi and other leaders arrested. Congress Committee declared unlawful association.
Aug-Sept.	Movement continued in the country.
Aug-16-20	League Working Committee met at Bombay and deplored decision of A.I.C.C. to launch open rebellion. Muslims called upon to abstain from participation.
1943 Jan. 29	Gandhi informed Viceroy of his intention to fast.
Feb. 8	Government of India offered to release Gandhi for duration of fast : Offer refused.
Feb. 9	Gandhi's Fast.
Feb. 17	Three members of Viceroy's Executive Council resigned over Gandhi's fast.
Feb. 22	Government issued paper on Congress responsibility for disturbances in 1942.
Oct. 20	Lord Wavell succeeded Lord Linlithgow as Viceroy of India.
1944 Feb. 17	Wavell addressing joint session of Central legislature stated Cripps Offer still open.

May 6            Gandhi released unconditionally on medical grounds.

June 17          Gandhi could not secure permission to interview members of Congress Working Committee.

July 15          Gandhi wrote to Wavell asking to see members of Working Committee and for an interview with Viceroy.

Aug. 15          Wavell replied to Gandhi that it was impossible to alter constitution during War.

Sept. 9-27       Gandhi-Jinnah talks, Correspondence released on Sept. 27.

1945 Jan. 20      Bhulabhai Desai met Viceroy and told him of Desai-Liaquat Ali pact, approved by Gandhi.

March 23        Wavell went to London, accompanied by V.P. Menon and Sir Evan Jenkins, for discussions with Secretary of State and India Committee.

May 7            Germany surrendered.

June 4           Wavell returned to Delhi.

June 14          Wavell announced conference to be held at Simla. Amery announced in House of Commons that Viceroy had been empowered to make proposals on composition of interim government in India.

June 15          Nehru and other Congress leaders released from prison.

June 25          14 Simla Conference.

July 5           General Election in Britain.

July 11          Conference failed.

July 14          Wavell announced failure of Conference, because League claimed right to nominate all Muslim members of executive council.

July 26          Formation of Labour Government in Britain. C.R. Attlee Prime Minister. Lord Pethick-Lawrence Secretary of State for India.

Aug. 14          Japan surrendered.

Sept. 19 Wavell made statement on election and his plans for summoning Constitution-making body.

Sept. 21 A.I.C.C. meeting at Bombay passed resolution characterising Wavell's proposal as "Vague and inadequate and unsatisfactory."

Nov. I.N.A. trial.

Late Dec. Results of elections to Central Legislative Assembly announced.

1946 Jan. 28 Viceroy addressed newly-elected central legislature.

Jan. R.A.F. strike.

Feb. 18-23 R.I.N. meeting.

March 25 Cabinet Mission arrived in Delhi.

April 3-17 Cabinet Mission interviewed Indian leaders.

April 10 Jinnah called for independent Pakistan.

April 24 Cabinet Mission scheme put before Jinnah and rejected. Rejected also by Congress leaders.

May 5-12 Second Simla Conference: its failure.

May 16 Cabinet Mission put out statement in which it presented its own scheme.

May 17 Cabinet Mission held press conference on its plan.

June 6 Council of Muslim League passed resolution accepting Cabinet mission's scheme of May 16.

June 12 Viceroy saw Nehru.

June 16 Cabinet Mission presented its own scheme for formation of interim government at Centre.

June 22 Viceroy wrote to Jinnah saying that he and Cabinet Mission could not accept Congress request for Muslims of their choice to be included in interim government.

June 25 Congress Working Committee meeting in Delhi passed resolution rejecting proposals for interim government but decided that

Congress should join proposed Constituent Assembly.

June 25 League Working Committee passed resolution agreeing to join interim government on the basis of statement of June 16.

June 29 Cabinet Mission left India.

July 6 A.I.C.C. meeting in Bombay ratified resolution of Working Committee accepting Cabinet Mission plan. Nehru took over Congress presidentship from Azad.

July 6 Nehru's statement not liked by Jinnah.

July 27 Jinnah's call for Pakistan.

July 29 League decided for 'direct action', and to observe Aug 16 as 'Direct Action Day'.

Aug. 12 Viceroy issued communique announcing his invitation to President of Congress to form provisional government.

Aug. 15 Nehru offered Jinnah 5 seats in interim government of 14. No result.

Aug. 16 'Direct Action Day' : Public holiday in Bengal and Sind.

Aug. 16-18 Great Calcutta Killing.

Aug. 24 Viceroy broadcast on formation of interim government.

Aug. 24 Jinnah after Viceroy's broadcast reiterated demand for division of India.

Sept. 2 Interim government took office without League.

Oct. 10-20 Noakhali disturbances.

Oct. 25 Interim government reconstituted.

Oct. 29 Gandhi arrived in Calcutta.

Oct. 30 Bihar outbreak, Viceroy, Nehru and Rajendra Prasad all visited the province.

Nov. 6 Gandhi came to Noakhali, remained till March 1.

Nov. 20 Viceroy issued invitation for meeting of Constituent Assembly. Jinnah called on League representative not to participate.

Nov. 3-6 London Conference. Its failure.

Dec. 18	Attlee made his first approach to Mountbatten to succeed Wavell.
1947 Feb.	Communal rioting in Punjab.
Feb. 20	Prime Minister made statement to Parliament announcing British intention of leaving India by June 1948. Mountbatten to succeeds Wavell as Viceroy.
March 2	Gandhi left Noakhali for Bihar.
March 5	Congress Working Committee called for partition of Punjab and Bengal.
March 22	Lord Mountbatten arrived in Delhi.
March 23	Wavell left Delhi.
March 24	Mountbatten sworn in as Viceroy.
March 24	Mountbatten had interviews with Nehru and Liaquat Ali.
March 25	Mountbatten saw Patel.
March 30	Gandhi left Bihar for Delhi.
March 31	Mountbatten saw Gandhi.
April 1	Gandhi's second interview with Mountbatten.
April 2	Mountbatten saw Gandhi again.
April 5	Mountbatten saw Jinnah.
April 14	Gandhi returned to Bihar.
April 15-16	Viceroy's plan put before governors' conference in New Delhi.
April 28	Rajendra Prasad, President of Constituent Assembly accepted principle of partition.
April 28	Gandhi returned to Delhi.
May 2	'Dickie Bird Plan' in London.
May 6	Gandhi had three-hour meeting with Jinnah.
May 7	Mountbatten at Simla.
May 8	Nehru and V.K.K. Menon as guests of Viceroy at Viceregal Lodge.
May 10	Viceroy called conference attended by Nehru. Mieville and V.P. Menon to discuss Menon's Plan.
May 10	Mountbatten received from London plan taken by Ismay, as approved by British cabinet.

May 10 Mountbatten showed plan to Nehru who rejected it.

May 11 Meeting with leaders postponed till June 2.

May 11 V.P. Menon prepared draft of his own plan.

May 15 Mountbatten summoned to London for consultation.

May 16 V.P. Menon drew up draft of eight 'Heads of Agreement' which was approved by Viceroy and shown to all leaders.

May 16 Viceroy had consultations with leaders. New Plan finalized. Nehru accepted it in writing; Jinnah verbally.

May 18 Mountbatten left Delhi for London, taking V.P. Menon with him.

May 19 Mountbatten arrived in London.

May 31 Mountbatten returned to India with final plan approved by British Cabinet

June 2 Meeting between Viceroy and Indian leaders.

June 2 Congress Working Committee met and decided to accept the plan.

June 2 Viceroy saw Jinnah who gave verbal assurance about his acceptance of the plan.

June 3 Second meeting between Mountbatten and Indian leaders who agreed to the plan.

June 3 The Plan announced over all-India radio by Viceroy followed by Nehru, Jinnah and Baldeva Singh. The Plan also announced in House of Commons.

June 4 Mountbatten held press conference at which he gave first formal indication that transfer of power would take place on August 15, 1947 and not June 1948.

June 4 Viceroy saw Gandhi just before his prayer meeting.

June 10 Plan ratified by Council of Muslim League.

June 14 A.I.C.C. meeting in Delhi ratified the plan.

June 20 Bengal Legislative Assembly opted for partition.

June 23      Punjab Legislative Assembly opted for partition.

June 26      Sind Legislative Assembly opted for Pakistan.

June          Baluchistan opted for Pakistan.

June 2        Mountbatten showed draft Indian Independence Bill to Indian leaders, and to Gandhi, for comment.

June 2        Jinnah told Mountbatten that he himself wished to be Governor-General of Pakistan.

June 4        Indian Independence Bill introduced in the House of Commons.

July 6-7      Referendum held in Sylhet, which decided to join East Bengal.

July 6-17     Referendum held in N.W.F.P. which decided to join Pakistan.

July 8        Attlee consulted opposition leaders question of Mountbatten remaining as Governor-General of India. All agreed.

July 16       Indian Independence Bill passed its third readings.

July 18       Indian Independence Act received Royal assent.

June 19       Mountbatten announced establishment of two separate provisional governments, India and Pakistan.

July 21       Union constitution committee presented to Constituent Assembly draft constitution.

July 22       Partition Council seized of the problem.

Aug. 6        Partition council met for the first time.

Aug. 7        Jinnah flew to Karachi

Aug. 11       Constituent Assembly of Pakistan met and elected Jinnah president.

Aug. 13       Radcliffe Award ready.

Aug. 13       Mountbatten flew to Karachi.

Aug. 14       Mountbatten addressed Pakistan Constituent Assembly and then flew back to Delhi.

Aug. 15 India and Pakistan became independent. Jinnah sworn in as Governor-General of Pakistan and Mountbatten as Governor-General of India. Pakistan Cabinet headed by Liaquat : Indian Cabinet by Nehru.

Aug. 16 Mountbatten handed the Radcliffe Award to the leaders of both dominions in Delhi.

Aug. 17 Radcliffe award published.

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